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Coptic Pope to make first visit to Syria

CAIRO (AFP) — Pope Shenuda II, head of the Coptic Christian church, is to make his first visit to Syria on Thursday where he will meet with top Muslim clerics, church officials said. The Pope will hold talks with senior government officials and the mufti of Syria, Sheikh Ahmad Kaftaro, for talks on "strengthening Islam-Christian dialogue and the situation in the region" during his four-day stay, an official said. Pope Shenuda is a popular figure in Syria because of his opposition to normalisation with Israel before the Jewish state gives back all occupied Arab land.

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Turkish tanks cross into northern Iraq

ANKARA (AP) — Some 130 Turkish tanks have crossed into northern Iraq for a major spring offensive against Turkish Kurdish rebels, a Kurdish daily said Saturday. Kurdish guerrillas, fighting for autonomy within Turkey, use bases in northern Iraq to stage hit-and-run attacks. The tanks crossed the border Thursday to secure roads for troops to use, the daily Demokrasi said. Several other major dailies reported the troop deployment along the Iraqi-Turkish border. The office of general staff denied an offensive was afoot although it confirmed troop movement which it said was aimed at "countering Kurdish rebel infiltrations," the Anatolia News Agency reported.

British Airways act against 'Air Algerie' Paris flights

LONDON (R) — British Airways (BA) said on Saturday it had diverted some flights away from Charles de Gaulle airport after French authorities allowed the state airline of strifortom Algeria to resume operations. BA said it would take legal action to overturn the airport's decision to allow Air Algerie to operate from one of the main terminals at Charles de Gaulle, a move it alleges threatens the security of other carriers. A BA spokesman said two of its flights destined for Charles de Gaulle on Saturday morning had landed at Orly airport south of the French capital and more might follow. When Air Algerie resumed flights to Charles de Gaulle on Friday it was operating from one of the main terminals along with other major carriers. It stopped flying to Paris two years ago in protest against being forced to use a remote terminal.

Youth killed in Yemeni election dispute

SANAA (AFP) — A supporter of the party of Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh was shot dead by a member of a rival Islamist party in the run-up to parliamentary elections Sunday, the General People's Congress (GPC) said Saturday. A member of the Al Islah Party opened fire on a meeting of the president's GPC on Thursday in Taiz province, killing an adolescent boy and wounding another, the GPC sources said. GPC supporters fired back and the gunman, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan against Soviet troops, was arrested by police after a chase. Al Islah is the main rival to the presidential party in Sunday's elections for 301 parliamentary seats. Three people have died in Yemen since the start of the election campaign. The GPC accused Al Islah of killing one of its activists in Ebb province south of the capital Sanaa on Sunday. And Al Islah said the presidential party murdered one of its supporters in the same province on the same day. Yemen's 16-million population, dominated by tribes, is heavily armed. There are an estimated 60 million firearms in the country.



His Majesty King Hussein and members of the Cabinet during their meeting on Saturday (photo by Yousef Allant)

Elections to be on schedule, no major changes on electoral law, King asserts

King criticises sensational media reports which create uncertainty in people's hearts

By Francesca Ciriaci

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein late Saturday announced that the next general elections will be held on schedule and, except for minor amendments, they will be governed by the 1993 electoral law. The King said the "minor amendments" to the current electoral law will concern "certain administrative changes only."

Speaking to reporters after attending part of a regular Cabinet session, the King also maintained that administrative reforms will be the main concern of the current Cabinet.

At the domestic level, His Majesty praised the government's long-term development and investment promotion plans. At the regional level, the King stressed Jordan's commitment to support the Palestinian cause.

Criticising media reports claiming the government was going to dismiss public employees en masse, "We are trying to introduce reforms and we will work to achieve it, but in a way that will not harm anyone," the King maintained, and stressed that "reforms translate into serving the nation and helping it move forward in its march towards major achievements."

"All sensational and disturbing reports and news which make people feel uncertain about their future, are out of place," His Majesty said.

The King was presum-

ably referring to a press report published on Saturday claiming that around 13,000 government employees would be sent to retirement and another 10,000 will be laid off within the course of the administrative reforms which the government is implementing.

Asked by reporters about Jordan's role in the peace process, the King said: "Jordan's moves are aimed at giving new momentum to the peace process."

"We are always ready to offer any service we could, requested by our brothers, especially those in Palestine," he said, stressing Jordan's willingness to coordinate with the Palestinians and "support them in their quest to regain their rights on their national soil."

The King said he expects the international community and the United States, in particular, to focus on ways to put the Palestinian-Israeli peace process back on track.

"The peace process will continue despite the difficulties, the obstacles and some parties' scepticism and apprehension," he said, reiterating Jordan's derivative that "there is no other way than pursuing a true peace which is just, honourable and can guarantee the future generations their rights and the life they dream of."

During the Cabinet session, the King heard the government's reports on long-term investment promotion and tourism development plans and expressed satisfaction with "the government's efforts

to create all the opportunities to achieve the development we hope to achieve."

Some of the plans, to be implemented by the year 2020, specifically focus on ways and means to boost tourism in the Aqaba region, mainly through infrastructure development.

In his visit to the prime minister's office, the King was accompanied by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

Earlier in the day, Lower House Speaker Sa'd Srour disclosed after a meeting with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali that the envisioned administrative changes could be related to the Ma'an electoral district.

Announcing that the same regulations introduced for the election of the 12th legislature will apply to the election of the 13th legislature, Mr. Srour implicitly denied that magnetic identity cards, to be issued by the Civil Status and Passports Department, will be a requirement in the upcoming elections.

The announcement of the distribution of magnetic cards was made three weeks ago by the Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid, but the same minister retracted it in an interview with the Arabic daily Al Dustour on Thursday.

In the same interview, the Minister of Interior also anticipated that some of the envisioned changes to the current electoral law would affect the Ma'an constituency.

According to Mr. Rashid, the Ma'an district, which currently elects five deputies, will be split into

two separate constituencies, one for the Red Sea port city of Aqaba and one for the southern town of Ma'an, to elect two and three deputies respectively.

The government's decision to maintain the 1993 electoral law ends months of national debate over the main traits of the law slated to regulate the upcoming elections.

It also comes notwithstanding repeated demands by all opposition parties, from the leftists to the Islamic Action Front (IAF), that the voting age be lowered from 19 to 18, the number of seats in the House of Deputies increased, and the electoral districts redrawn according to the density of population.

The one-person, one-vote system, introduced with the 1993 electoral law, was harshly criticised by the opposition on grounds that it "encourages tribalism."

Once the formula was endorsed by Parliament in January, the IAF and other opposition parties demanded that the Kingdom at least be divided in a number of constituencies equal to the number of deputies to be elected. The opposition also urged that constituencies be equal and have the same number of voters.

In the past months, the national debate over the electoral law also touched on the issue of the possible introduction of a women's quota which, though never officially proposed before Parliament, has been floating in academic as well as political circles.

Palestinians criticise biased U.S. role in peace process

Levy says resolution will be scrapped

Combined agency dispatches

THE PALESTINIANS have notched up a major success in the U.N. General Assembly, winning support for a strong political message to Israel despite fierce lobbying by Washington, diplomats say.

Palestine's observer to the United Nations, Nasser Al Kidwa, admitted on Friday following the 134-3 adoption of a tough-worded resolution that he had faced an uphill struggle to convene the two-day special emergency session.

Such sessions can only be called when the U.N. Security Council has failed in its duties of maintaining international peace and security.

The move was naturally resisted by the five permanent U.N. Security Council members with veto power — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

According to several diplomats, Washington lobbied hard behind the scenes, particularly among Latin American non-aligned states, in a bid to persuade them to withhold support for the emergency session, which took three weeks to convene.

While the Palestinians and the U.N. Arab group were persuading the required number of 93 U.N. member states to agree to the first emergency session in 15 years, they also had to overcome resistance to their proposed draft resolution.

The Palestinians originally sought a reference to economic sanctions to punish Israel for the construction of the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

In the face of resistance from the 15-nation European Union (EU), the Palestinians had to water down the text, but were able to get 14 EU states to agree to a call for the "cessation of all forms of assistance and support" for Israeli settlements.

Although Germany broke ranks with its European colleagues to abstain, European diplomats played down the rift and stressed that the German delegate had publicly stated his country's commitment to EU policy opposing Israeli settlement construction.

A total 11 countries abstained in Friday's vote, which was nevertheless adopted by four more votes than the previous General Assembly vote on March 13 when 130 countries expressed "deep concern"

about the Jabal Abu Ghneim issue.

On Friday, the assembly voted to condemn the construction by Israel of the settlement building "and all other illegal Israeli actions" in the occupied territories.

The resolution called for the "immediate and full cessation" of work on Jabal Abu Ghneim and urged all states to stop any support and assistance for Israeli settlement activities.

Explaining the vote, he said "What happened was that the degree of violation — and the U.S. abuse of the veto — made the U.N. membership only more determined."

The Palestinians and the Arab nations took their complaint to the General Assembly after Washington used its Security Council veto twice last month to prevent adoption of a resolution criticising Israel over Jabal Abu Ghneim.

Mr. Kidwa said that Washington should learn from Friday's experience that "the Security Council will be compelled" to discuss the issue "and that it should not block the work of the council again."

He noted that the emergency session was only "suspended and could be resumed at any time," depending on the attitude of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan under Friday's resolution must report back "within two months" on whether the Jabal Abu Ghneim construction has been halted.

Israel said Saturday it was confident the resolution condemning its settlement building in Jerusalem would be scrapped.

"This resolution will be rescinded, like that of the U.N. General Assembly in November 1975," which equated Zionism with a form of racism," Foreign Minister David Levy told Israel Radio.

"Many still reject the principle of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. What has just happened would have happened anyway next year or the year after," Mr. Levy added in a reference to the U.N. General Assembly's condemnation.

Tayeb Abdul Rahim, general secretary of the Palestinian presidency said on Saturday the United States should be "more neutral" in its Middle East policy and called on Washington to upgrade the level of its involvement in efforts to salvage the peace process.

In an indirect criticism of

U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross, Mr. Abdul Rahim said "I am not doubting anyone, but I am saying that the U.S. administration should be more neutral and must adhere more to the basis of the peace process."

The U.S. sent Mr. Ross to the region earlier this month for talks with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Israel to find ways to bring the sides back to the negotiating table. Afterwards the United States and major gaps remained between the two sides.

Marwan Kanatani, Mr. Arafat's spokesman, said Mr. Ross would be returning to the region on May 2.

Palestinian officials complained that during Mr. Ross' talks with PLO leaders, he was not "even-handed" and was trying to persuade them to accept Israel's position.

Palestinians were angered by the United States, the main broker in the Arab-Israeli peace process, for vetoing two U.N. Security Council resolutions criticising Israel over settlement building in Arab East Jerusalem.

On Friday, the U.S. again voted against a U.N. General Assembly resolution calling for an immediate halt to the settlement's construction.

"During President Arafat's visit to Washington and during the visit of the senior Palestinian delegation to Washington this month, we were surprised to learn that a lot of information was not conveyed to the U.S. administration at higher levels," Mr. Abdul Rahim said.

He recalled a telephone conversation between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Albright after a bombing by a militant in a Tel Aviv cafe killed three Israeli women on March 21.

"Secretary Albright talked to Arafat about terrorism and the need to restore security cooperation with Israel, but Mr. Arafat asked her why they didn't call him to give him condolences for the killing of five Palestinians by Israeli soldiers in Hebron," he said.

"She said she wasn't informed about it and promised to call back and she called after two hours and said she was conveying President Clinton's condolences to him," he added.

"This and many other incidents show us that only selected information is conveyed to officials at higher levels at the State Department," Mr. Abdul Rahim said.

Hamas asks Arafat to relaunch intifada

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Palestinian movement Hamas said Saturday it had asked President Yasser Arafat to relaunch the intifada against Israel as the only option available to the Palestinians.

After a month-long deadlock in the peace process "our only alternative in the short-term is the intifada," Hamas spokesman Mahmoud Zahar said.

The Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation began in 1987 and ended in 1993 with the Israeli-Palestinian autonomy accords, which Hamas fiercely opposes.

"Arafat now admits that

our gloomy predictions at the start of the peace process were well-founded," Dr. Zahar said.

The peace process has been in deep crisis since Israel began work in mid-March on a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem, which the Palestinians claim as their future capital.

Mr. Arafat has said Israel must halt construction if peace talks are to resume, something right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has refused to do.

Mr. Netanyahu in turn insists Mr. Arafat clamp down on anti-Israeli groups such as the Islamic

Resistance Movement (Hamas) as a precondition for further talks.

Dr. Zahar said that Hamas has been in contact with Mr. Arafat's self-rule government since he convened various Palestinian factions for "national dialogue" in February, and that the group has formally asked him to "freeze his security cooperation with Israel, release the 200 militants jailed in Gaza and actively take part in relaunching the intifada."

Whether the Israeli government is formed by Likud or Labour, we cannot expect any presents from it," Dr. Zahar said.

"We will never recover

an inch of Jerusalem through negotiations. It is only through force that we will liberate the Holy City and all of Palestine," he said.

Dr. Zahar said Hamas had doubled its popularity since Mr. Netanyahu came to power last May at the head of a hardline nationalist government, and that 40 per cent of the Palestinian population supported its radical stance.

He warned that the situation in the territories could become explosive because of the peace deadlock and repeated security closures by Israel and that it could even lead to a Palestinian civil war.

Palestinians and Israelis search for killers of two Israeli women

WADI KULT, West Bank (AFP) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is cooperating with Israeli police in the investigation of the killings of two young Jewish women found stabbed in the West Bank, Israeli officials said Saturday.

"Large numbers of Israeli police are combing the region to find any evidence that would lead them to the murderers," an Israeli police official said.

The Palestinian (National) Authority has, for its part, investigated several neighbouring Palestinian villages, and the entire area has been sealed off to allow for search operations," the official added.

The bodies of the women, one a 23-year-old Israeli settler, were hidden near a stream in Wadi Kult close to her settlement of Kfar Adu-mim, northeast of Jerusalem, police said.

They were discovered Friday by a Jewish settler who was on an excursion in the desert with a friend. The women's throats had been cut several times by a knife, police said.

The women were reported on Friday as having been raped before being killed. The murders were believed to have been carried out on Thursday.

"There is practically no criminal activity in area, and so we have to work on the

assumption that it is political act that was probably committed by more than one attacker," the Israeli police commander in the area, Yossi Sitbon, said on public radio.

No Palestinian militant group has claimed responsibility for the attack, police said.

Israeli police and the army supported by helicopters combed the area, as the investigation focused on an attack by Palestinian nationalists while not ruling out a criminal act.

The security forces have warned against attacks by Palestinian militants to coincide with this week's Jewish Passover holidays.

Palestinian teachers end strike after PNA frees protest leaders

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Palestinian teachers went back to work on Saturday after the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) released detained strike organisers and agreed to discuss the teachers' demands, officials and teachers said.

President Yasser Arafat has ordered the release of all teachers during Friday's cabinet meeting. All have been released Friday night, Jibril Rujoub, Palestinian preventive security chief in the West Bank, told Reuters.

Teachers said after the release they decided to end the strike for higher pay and improved working conditions. The action by members of the teachers union was the first labour

strike against the PNA.

West Bank schools, paralysed by the strike since early April, resumed classes on Saturday. Teachers have complained that their salary of about \$400 a month is not enough to cover their basic needs.

Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council said the council promised teachers to discuss their demands in order to prevent security and police forces from intervening in Union functions.

On Monday Palestinian police in the West Bank arrested more than 25 teachers who were leading the strike. Mr. Rujoub and other security officials led the negotiations with the strike committee.

"This is not a police state

and it is not accepted to have the security negotiate a deal with union members," said a legislator who refused to be identified.

"We have a law, courts and civilian institutions that should solve the problem, not the police."

Teachers said they were promised by the PNA to approve the formation of a teachers association and to improve their working conditions.

According to Agence France Presse, most teachers went back to their classrooms Thursday but said they were doing so only because they had been threatened with arrest and dismissal, and that their demands remained outstanding.

One of the 25 strike lead-

ers, teacher Khalil Abu Ali, said: "I was released on Friday evening. I did not return to school today but I hope to be back with my pupils on Sunday and we will work to ensure exams can be held on schedule and the school year ends without any other problems."

However, Abu Ali, from Jenin in the West Bank, warned of a "new teachers' strike in the new school year from September if there is no movement on the teachers' demands."

After a Friday cabinet meeting President Arafat decided to release the teachers so they could be back at school on Saturday.

Hanan Ashrawi, minister of higher education, said: "This decision brings the crisis to an end."



VICTIM OF ISRAELI BRUTALITY: Mariam Boustani, 9, is helped by her mother to eat on Sunday. Mariam lost three fingers of her hand after she touched a booby-trapped toy believed to be an Israeli mine in her South Lebanon village of Deir Aames last month (AFP photo)

Egypt to open to public Howard Carter's home

LUXOR (AFP) — The Egyptian home of the renowned British archaeologist Howard Carter will be opened up to the public in October for the 75th anniversary of his discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb, officials said Saturday.

The house of British scholar Howard Carter is being restored so it can be opened to tourists in October, said Ali Hassan, secretary general of the Egyptian Antiquities Council.

The house, built on a hillside near the entry to the Valley of the Kings near Luxor in southern Egypt, has been used as an office for archaeological inspectors in recent years.

Mohammad Ali Saghir, antiquities chief in southern Egypt, said some of Carter's personal belongings would be returned to the house for exhibition.

Carter discovered the unopened tomb of the boy king Tutankhamun, who lived from 1354 to 1345 BCE, in the Valley of the Kings in 1922.

The archaeologist died in 1939 from an illness unrelated to his work, but local legend has it he died from the "curse of the pharaohs" who supposedly left poison in their tombs to kill those who entered there.

Kuwait to attend Arab summits even if Iraqi leader shows up

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait will attend any Arab summit even if Iraqi President Saddam Hussein turns up because it is in the interest of the Arab World, the Kuwaiti foreign minister said in remarks reported Saturday.

"When the conditions require the convening of an Arab summit it means that it is in the Arab interest," Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah told the Lebanese magazine Alkar.

In his remarks to the magazine quoted in the Kuwaiti daily Al-Sayassah, Sheikh Sabah said that "with Saddam Hussein or without Saddam Hussein Kuwait could not be absent" from such a gathering. But Sheikh Sabah said he thought it was unlikely that the Iraqi president would be able to leave the Iraqi capital to attend any gathering of Arab leaders.

"Saddam Hussein would not be able to leave Baghdad even to attend an Arab summit... I don't think he leaves Baghdad," Sheikh Sabah said.

Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait in August 1990 and were expelled by a U.S.-led coalition seven months later.

Kuwait has repeatedly claimed that the Iraqi regime still has designs on the country.

Kuwait holds naval wargames with allies

Meanwhile, a British naval officer said British, American, French and Kuwaiti naval forces began five days of exercises on Saturday that will include wargames at sea and live-fire practice.

"The most important (objective of the exercise) is to increase the inter-operability of all coalition and allied forces within the Gulf," Commander Duncan Potts told reporters.

The five-day exercise, code-named Eager Sentry, officially began on Saturday and will involve three days of wargames and live-fire training at sea starting Sunday, Mr. Potts said aboard the destroyer HMS Southampton in Kuwait's main port.

Taking part alongside the British destroyer are a U.S. frigate and minesweeper, a French frigate and a Kuwaiti fast patrol boat and coastal craft. Kuwaiti jet fighters will also join in with simulated air attacks, Mr. Potts said.

forces in the Gulf had been monitoring the recent military manoeuvres staged by the Iraqis along their Gulf coastline that ended on Friday.

"I don't want to get into specifics, but ... we like to keep a good picture and handle on everything that goes on in the Gulf," Mr. Potts said.

"They (the Iraqis) are a maritime power with a capability in the area, and as we monitor everybody in the area obviously we like to keep a handle on what they're doing and what their capabilities are," he said.

The Iranian exercises were the largest ever staged by Iran, involving 200,000 troops in sea, land and air wargames.

Mr. Potts said the Chinese-built C-802 anti-surface ship missiles now in the Iranian armoury "provides us with a new challenge in the area," while the "submarine threat from three Russian-built kiloclass submarines adds 'another dimension to the military capability of Iran in the area'."

HMS Southampton exercised with forces from the United Arab Emirates and Oman earlier this year, while manoeuvres with Saudi Arabia and Bahrain will be held in May.

Egyptian sheikh's coffin refuses to go to cemetery — newspaper

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian cleric "chose" his own burial place after he died when his coffin mysteriously refused to go to the local cemetery and instead came to rest in a field, a newspaper said Saturday.

Villagers in Abig, north of Cairo, tried to carry the coffin of Sheikh Abdul Rahman Mohammad

Sayad to the cemetery when it "suddenly changed direction and they could do nothing about it," the government weekly Al-Khbar Al-Yom said.

"The coffin came to rest in a field which the sheikh's father owned before selling it to a farmer. None could budge it an inch," the paper said.

The villagers crowded

around the coffin shouting with joy and decided to bury it on the spot and build a mosque to commemorate the miracle.

The village's police chief confirmed that he, too, could not move the coffin and is now backing the villagers' application to the local council to build a mosque on the site.

'Israel obstructing work on Gaza airport'

GAZA (R) — A senior Palestinian official accused Israel on Saturday of trying to obstruct work on a Palestinian airport in self-ruled Gaza by positioning a military camp on its premises.

"The Israeli side is trying to obstruct the work of our airport. We cut trees in the airport area because the trees obstruct the flight of the airplanes, but an Israeli military force came and camped in it last week," said Tayeb Abdul Rahim, general secretary of the Palestinian presidency.

"We called for a meeting that was held on Friday attended by senior Israeli military officials and (American) CIA officials and we demanded they leave immediately," he

told reporters.

The Israeli army confirmed in a statement that a few days ago its army built a watch tower near the site but it said the move was not related to the Palestinian airport.

The army said the watch tower was built "following serious violations of the agreement by the Palestinian authority. The tower was built in an area under full Israeli security control not related to the airport."

Under the PLO-Israel peace deal, Israel approved the building of a Palestinian airport but it has demanded the facility fall under its security control.

The Palestinian authority began building the airport in

Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip, but a dispute over security control with Israel has delayed its operation.

A new Palestinian airline has been operating from Egypt pending Israeli approval to fly out of the Gaza Strip.

A Palestinian official said Palestinians have offered air traffic and security liaison offices to the Israelis to allay their security concerns.

"But they still hesitate to allow us to operate the airport and the Palestinian airline for political reasons. It symbolises statehood which Israel rejects," the official, who asked not to be identified, said.

Security officials said the Palestinian authority com-

plained to Israel about the arrest of two Gazan Muslim pilgrims by Israeli soldiers at the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and Gaza.

Israeli police said they were checking the report.

They said the two Palestinians were arrested as they tried to enter Gaza on their way back from the Hajj (pilgrimage) in Saudi Arabia.

"The Israelis claimed they were arrested for belonging to the Islamic Jihad group," a Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), security official told Reuters.

The militant Islamic Jihad movement, opposed to the peace process, has carried out a number of attacks against Israel.

Turkish official launch remarriage drive

DARGECH, Turkey (R) — A Turkish cabinet member on Saturday launched a campaign, in line with a planned anti-Islamist crackdown, to give a secularist blessing to couples already married in unofficial Muslim ceremonies.

More than 200 couples were wed at a mass civil ceremony attended by State Minister Islay Saygin in the small southern town of Dargech.

"Today 210 couples are marrying. In this way their children will have identity cards and their children will be able to do their national service," Saygin told a crowd of around 500.

Folklore groups performed traditional dances to drums and pipes in front of a building draped with Turkish flags and a poster of secularist national hero Kemal Ataturk.

Turkey, an overwhelmingly Muslim but secularist country, does not recognise religious marriage rules, under which men can marry up to four women if they can provide for them all.

Eighty-five per cent of couples chose to have both official and religious ceremonies, according to ministry figures, but the vast majority of men only have one wife.

The cabinet of Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan includes two ministers who have more than one wife as allowed by Sharia law.

One of the brides-to-be, 20-year-old Ayse Calan, held her one-year-old son in her arms as she explained in Kurdish why she was going ahead with the official marriage.

"Five years ago I married in a religious ceremony. I was

ashamed and could not have an official marriage but now I want this so that my child can get an identity card," she said.

Among the grooms was a 60-year-old local farmer, Yusuf Halis, who married his wife in a religious ceremony 30 years ago. He said they had known nothing of official marriages at the time and were encouraged to remarry by local enthusiasm for the scheme. "When we heard everybody was getting married we decided to give it a go as well," Halis said.

Saygin, responsible for women and family affairs, ordered provincial governors in March to identify unofficially married couples and carry out official weddings.

"Because they were not married in the eyes of the law we were not able to take charge of our citizens and chil-

dren," she said.

Other ministers from Deputy Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's secularist True Path Party have also instructed governors to implement restrictions on Islamic-style dress, close illegal Koran courses, and illegal sects as ordered by the armed forces.

Saygin's ministry says 7.5 per cent of couples have only Islamic weddings in the country as a whole, but the figure stands at 18 per cent in the mainly-Kurdish southeast, scene of an armed conflict between troops and Kurdish rebels.

Under Turkish law, couples who only have an Islamic marriage can face two to six months in jail and the religious official who marries them can be given a one to three months sentence, but the law hardly ever put into practice.

JORDAN TELEVISION

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 ...Cartoon — Jonny Quest
14:30 ...Cartoon — Problem Child
15:00 ...French Programmes
16:00 ...Doc. — The Global Family
16:25 ...Energy Express
16:50 ...Doc. — Our World, Their World
17:15 ...Clear Water — Big Fish
18:00 ...French Programmes
19:30 ...News headlines
19:35 ...Comedy — Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00 ...Doc. — World Echo
20:30 ...Medical Drama — Side Effects
21:10 ...Doc. — Nautilus
22:00 ...News in English
22:25 ...Special Programme — Easter Parade
23:15 ...Sisters

PRAYER TIMES

04:26 ...Fajr
05:50 ...Sunrise/Duha
12:33 ...Dhuhr
16:12 ...Asr
19:17 ...Maghrib
20:41 ...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.

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St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622266
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 311295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to drop today and tomorrow becoming below average by 6-7 degrees centigrade. Fine spring weather

conditions will prevail with a chance of showers in the northern regions and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate to active and seas rough.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Ossama Al Hussein ...847389
Dr. Khalidoun Kloub ...816715
Dr. Nidal As'ad ...751673
Dr. Issam Asmar ...890504
Firas pharmacy ...661912
Ferdows pharmacy ...778336
Al Asema pharmacy ...637055
Nairoukh pharmacy ...623672
Al Salam pharmacy ...636730
Yacoub pharmacy ...644945

Shmeisani pharmacy ...637660
Najib pharmacy ...847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu ...281484
Al Quds pharmacy ...(-)-
ZARQA:
Dr. Nabil Safarini ...901323
Khalifeh pharmacy ...985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre ...637111
Civil Defence Department ...661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue ...630341
Rescue Police ...192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade ...617101
Blood Bank ...775121
Highway Police ...843402
Traffic Police ...896390
Public Security Dept. ...630321
Hotel Complaints ...605800
Price Complaints ...661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints ...897465
Amman Municipality Complaints ...787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) ...121
Overseas Calls ...010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs ...623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs ...661101
Jordan Television ...773111
Radio Jordan ...774111
Water Authority ...680100

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre ...813813/32
Khalidi Maternity ...644281/6
Akileh Maternity ...642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity ...642362
Malhas, J. Amman ...636140
Palestine, Shmeisani ...607071
Shmeisani Hospital ...669131
University Hospital ...845845
Al-Muasher Hospital ...667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali ...666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali ...664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen ...777101/3
Al-Bashir ...775111/26
Army, Marka ...891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital ...602240/50
Amal Hospital ...674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery ...865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital ...091983323
Zarqa National Hospital ...091900560
Ibn Sina Hospital ...091986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital ...091990990

J. Electricity Authority ...815615
Electric Power Co. ...636381
RJ Flight Information ...08-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (52700)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:45 Osaka, Bangkok, Dubai (add) (RJ)
09:35 Jeddah (RJ)
09:45 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:10 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
10:30 Bombay (RJ)
10:30 Aqaba (RJ)
11:05 Beirut (RJ)

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 021275555
Greek Catholic Hospital 021272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital 021247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 031314111

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:20 Beirut (RJ)
08:00 Aqaba (RJ)
11:00 Aqaba, Madrid (add) (RJ)
11:00 Frankfurt, Brussels (RJ)

11:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
18:00 Paris (RJ)
18:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
18:50 London (RJ)
20:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
20:30 Tunis (RJ)
20:40 Rome (RJ)
22:25 Athens, Vienna (RJ)
22:30 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
00:15 Frankfurt, Brussels, Damascus (RJ)
00:20 Madrid (RJ)
01:15 Dubai (add) (RJ)
03:30 Cairo (RJ)

OTHER FLIGHTS

12:00 Sanaa (IY)
12:00 Jeddah (SV)
13:35 Bahrain (GF)
15:20 Moscow (SU)
21:10 Beirut (ME)
21:35 Cairo (MS)
23:20 Istanbul (TK)
00:59 Cairo (MS)
02:15 London (BA)
07:20 London (BA)
07:20 Tel Aviv (LY)

12:10 Tunis (RJ)
12:10 Rome (RJ)
12:35 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:30 Vienna, Athens (RJ)
13:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
13:20 New Delhi (RJ)
18:00 Dubai (add) (RJ)
20:00 Abu Dhabi, Jakarta (add) (RJ)
21:10 Cairo (RJ)
23:00 Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
23:00 New Delhi (RJ)
23:00 Damascus (RJ)
23:10 Bangkok (RJ)
00:45 Sanaa (RJ)
03:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
03:30 Jeddah (RJ)
03:50 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

HUJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman ...8:00 am every Monday
Arr. Damascus ...3:00 pm every Monday
Dep. Damascus ...7:30 am every Sunday
Arr. Amman ...5:00 pm every Sunday



Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor pay their respects at the tomb of the late Queen Mother where they recite Koranic verses. Also pictured is Royal Court Imam Ahmad Hlayel (Petra photo)

Royal family marks third anniversary of the passing of late Queen Mother

AMMAN (Petra) — To mark the third anniversary of the passing away of the late Queen Zein, Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor and Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan, Princess Sarvath and Princess Basma as well as her husband Mr. Walid Kurdi Saturday visited the tomb of the late Queen Mother, where they recited verses of the Holy Koran.

They also visited the tomb of the late King Abdullah, King Hussein's grandfather and founder of the Kingdom and recited Koranic verses there.

Also visiting the tomb on this anniversary were delegations from the Um Al Hussein Orphanage, Jordanian women's unions, the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development, the National Committee for Jordanian Women, the National Population Commission and the commander of the Palestinian army in Jordan, accompanied by senior staff.

The Queen Mother played a key role in the political development of the Kingdom in the early 1950s, in the writing of the Constitution in 1952 and in social development, Petra stated.

Following the assassination of King Abdullah, founder of the Kingdom, in 1951, King Zein assumed responsibility until King Hussein was proclaimed Monarch in 1953 at the age of 18.

In 1944, she spearheaded the creation of the first women's union in Jordan and acted as president thereof, and she was also instrumental in establishing the women's branch of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society in 1948.

She dedicated her efforts to the Um Al Hussein Orphanage in Amman and other charitable organisations in the Kingdom.

JAT to resume flights to Amman this year

AMMAN (J.T.) — Yugoslav Airlines (JAT) will resume flights between Belgrade and Amman as of mid-June following a hiatus of several years, a representative of the Amman airlines office, Emile Coro, said Saturday.

JAT had halted flights to Amman in early 1993 due to a UN air embargo imposed during the war in the former Yugoslavia.

Yugoslav Airlines has expressed its desire to resume flights between Amman and Belgrade as the embargo has been lifted, according to Mr. Coro.

The reinstatement of flights will also further strengthen economic, cultural and trade ties between Jordan and Yugoslavia, he added.

The decision was taken during a visit to Jordan by a Yugoslav delegation earlier this month in which discussions were initiated on increasing imports of Jordanian phosphate and other products.

After that meeting, the two sides released a statement maintaining their development of an agreement to be signed this year covering Yugoslav exports of industrial equipment to Jordan at rates below those of the global market.

Jordan's debts to the former Yugoslavia, estimated at \$30 million, will be partially paid in cash and the rest through the exports of approximately 800,000 tonnes of phosphate to Yugoslav markets, the statement said.

Mr. Coro told the Jordan Times that he has initiated contacts and consultations with Yugoslav officials concerned with air transport during a visit he made to Belgrade and reached an agreement on operating a weekly flight between Amman and Belgrade by June of this year.

Mr. Coro affirmed that the JTA will be active in transporting tourists, students and businesspersons as well as goods between Jordan and Europe.

It will also serve the Yugoslav community residing in Jordan and closely coordinate with Royal Jordanian, he said.

Yugoslav Airlines Assistant Representative Hanna Petro, who accompanied Mr. Coro to Belgrade, confirmed that JAT will be offering special services to Jordanian exporters in directly connecting with other parts of Europe and in helping ship their products to European markets.

Algerian minister meets with premier

AMMAN (Petra) — Algerian Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Abu Baker Ben Bouzeid Saturday met Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali to review topics to be discussed by a joint Jordanian-Algerian committee scheduled to convene this summer.

Mr. Bouzeid described the meeting, to be held in Algiers, as aimed to further strengthen bilateral ties.

Concluding a three-day visit to Jordan, the Algerian minister said that he, Dr. Majali and Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri discussed means of promoting educational and cultural cooperation.

He toured a number of universities and concluded an accord to help universities in Algeria and Jordan initiate cooperation in higher education.

During the meeting, Dr. Majali maintained Jordan's eagerness to increase cooperation with Algeria in all fields and expressed hope that the Algerian people would overcome current dilemmas and enjoy stability and security once more. The prime minister was referring to periodic massacres which have claimed the lives of 440 people in the past six weeks.

Dr. Majali also stated that as Jordan lacks natural resources, it prides itself on qualified manpower.



Algerian Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Abu Baker Ben Bouzeid Saturday meets with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali to review topics to be discussed by a joint Jordanian-Algerian committee scheduled to convene this summer (Petra photo)

Mr. Bouzeid reported the Algerian delegation as deeply impressed by the level of development of the Kingdom's higher educational institutions.

Car accident claims two lives

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Police are questioning a 50-year old man in connection with a hit and run accident, which left two people dead early Saturday morning on the Sweileh Bridge, officials said.

According to officials, the two victims, Mohammad Newiran, 35, and Ahmad Abdul Jalil, 40, both employees of the Greater Amman Municipality, were cleaning the Sweileh bridge when they were struck by a vehicle at 7:30 a.m., Saturday.

The two men suffered internal bleeding, fractures to the skull and spinal cord, a Civil Defence Department (CDD) official said. "They were declared dead on arrival to hospital."

A police official told the Jordan Times that bystanders were able to give a full description of the vehicle which struck the two men.

On questioning the vehicle owner, a police official told the Jordan Times that the owner denied being the driver of the vehicle at the time of the accident.

The vehicle owner filed a report to police shortly after the incident, claiming that his vehicle had been stolen, the official said.

"We are still investigating the incident, and we are hoping to achieve positive results soon," the official asserted.

Two other people were killed and a third was listed in fair condition in another accident in the town of Qweismeh, police reports indicated.

Meeting focuses on water cooperation

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan Saturday called for regional cooperation to procure appropriate solutions for water insufficiency and meet the needs of a growing population.

Addressing the opening session of a regional meeting on water-related issues, Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin maintained that constructive interaction among Islamic countries would help resolve problems linked to the insufficient water supply.

Positive interaction, he asserted, can turn the question of water into an instrument for closer ties among Islamic countries, rather than a factor of enmity and hatred.

Dr. Haddadin affirmed that regional and international cooperation in water-related issues reduces problems resulting from water shortage.

The meeting was organised by the Islamic Network for the Development and Management of Water Resources at the Amman-based Islamic Academy of Sciences, set up by the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

OIC Secretary General Ibrahim Ouf addressed the meeting, stating that the organisation has not confined its efforts to political, economic and cultural issues, but has been preparing to handle matters related to science and technology as well as issues such as water resources.

He described the water sector as important and stated that these problems are continually aggravated by the passage of time and that therefore this meeting will be dedicated to creating programmes which enable OIC member states to better manage their respective water resources.

Discussion will cover the Islamic world's water needs between the years 1997 and 2002, Mr. Ouf added.

The water meeting closely followed a general conference of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in Amman earlier this month which analysed the current regional water crisis and suggested various solutions.

That meeting concluded with pledges of regional cooperation and discussions regarding future methods of attaining water through remote sensing techniques and studies of underground aquifers.

Participating in Saturday's meeting were representatives of Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Sudan, Mali, Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Malaysia.

Mining conference opens in Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan has succeeded in utilising vast reserves of raw minerals to manufacture cement, fertiliser, rock, wool and ceramics, earning the country from between JD 500 million to JD 650 million annually over the past few years, Director General of the Natural Resources Authority (NRA) Khaled Shiyab said Saturday.

Addressing the opening session of the Second Jordanian Mining Conference, Mr. Shiyab said that Jordanian industries have been exploiting phosphate, potash, clay, basalt, glass, granite, marble and other raw materials, but have yet to utilise reserves of copper and manganese found in the country.

Deputising for Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Mohammad Saleh Hourani, Mr. Shiyab stated that mineral resources play a major role in the country's economic, industrial and social development.

Head of the Conference Preparatory Committee Mohammad Taha told the session that delegates will review 60 reports submitted by

the ten participating countries, covering the latest trends in mineral exploitation.

Bassam Sunnaa from Jordan submitted a report outlining various types of minerals utilised in the Kingdom and those which are still to be tapped while Zuhair Rabbah from the Jordan Engineers Association (JEA) maintained that 740 Jordanian engineers are currently employed in the Kingdom's mining industries.

Other reports in the first session were submitted by delegates from Yemen, Algeria and Egypt outlining exploration of metals and minerals such as gold in Yemen and iron in Algeria.

Papers still to be discussed cover a wide range of topics including prospecting for petroleum and water as well as subjects related to geology, geophysics and geochemistry.

The conference was organised by the Jordan Engineers Association. Upon the conclusion of the meetings, delegates will tour mining projects.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

"Tandem" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh on Monday at 8:30 p.m.

CHOIR

* Performance of religious songs by the Jordanian Baptist Community on Sunday at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

LECTURE

* "The Old Sites of Wadi Rum: Epigraphs and Archaeological Traces" at the French Cultural Centre on Sunday at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* "First Amman International Exhibition of Children's Books" at the International Exhibition Centre, University Road (Tel. 659891/2), until April 28.

* "Easter egg hunt at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra (Tel. 699141/2), until April 28.

Scientific research ministers to Bedouin lives

By Tanya Habjouqa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Scientific research is improving the lives of the Bedouin living in the harsh desert of the North Badia, through innovative agricultural projects at the Jordan Badia Research and Development Programme (JBRDP).

The main source of income of the Badia Bedouin is commerce of sheep and their dairy products — yet despite growing flocks, disease and overgrazing have been hindering profits, JBRDP officials said.

Research has shown that five infectious diseases prevail in the area, causing a loss of productivity, JBRDP Director of the Veterinary Department Mukhlis Amarin stated.

"We must not allow these infectious diseases to cross borders," Dr. Amarin said. "Our objective is to provide vaccines against the diseases which could destroy livestock."

A team of Jordanian and British researchers have introduced a vaccination programme effective against these five diseases in one semi-annual shot, he added.

Approximately one million sheep will be vaccinated at minimum cost to the Bedouin, under the guidance of the Ministry of Agriculture in conjunction with the Badia programme, JBRDP Director Mohammed Shahbaz said.

In an interview with the Jordan Times, one Bedouin expressed satisfaction with the programme's achievements, praising God and the doctors.

"I have 145 sheep, and thanks to these doctors they are healthy," Ali Salim, 78, said.

Attempts to reduce feed cost for farmers have also proven successful, as we have introduced a new feed composed of tomato and olive pulp, reducing the cost from JD 120 to JD 80, Ministry of Agriculture researcher Edward Allenby affirmed.

Dr. Allenby introduced journalists to the programme's latest additions to the sheep family, crossbred from Jordanian, Iraqi, and Milk sheep.

"We expect the new females to produce five times the normal Badia milk production, and if all goes according to plan, we estimate a profit of JD 120 per head as opposed to the current JD 12 the farmer presently receives," he said.

JBRDP Head of Public Relations Sharifa Zein



Flock of sheep receives vaccination as part of JBRDP (photo by Yusef Allan)

Nasser guided 27 journalists through the Badia facilities, showcasing the latest research developments.

One such development is the use of satellite images from the Euro Space Agency and NASA to map and monitor soil moisture in the region.

According to JBRDP researcher, Andrew Millington, such technology could aid in the prediction of vegetation growth and soil erosion, as well serve as a monitoring system.

Working with the University of Jordan and Leicester University in England, Jordan is one of the 60 countries to which NASA provides free photos, Dr. Millington said.

"With the results of our research, we can provide correct scientific information to decision-makers," Sharifa Zein told the Jordan Times.

Other work showcased included research from the University of Jordan and the JBRDP regarding the resilient desert almond, which survives on little water and a temperature of 50 degrees Celsius.

Researchers are grafting the root of the desert almond with that of a peach to create a new generation of peach capable of growth in an arid climate.

"One such peach is successfully growing, and this is a scientific breakthrough

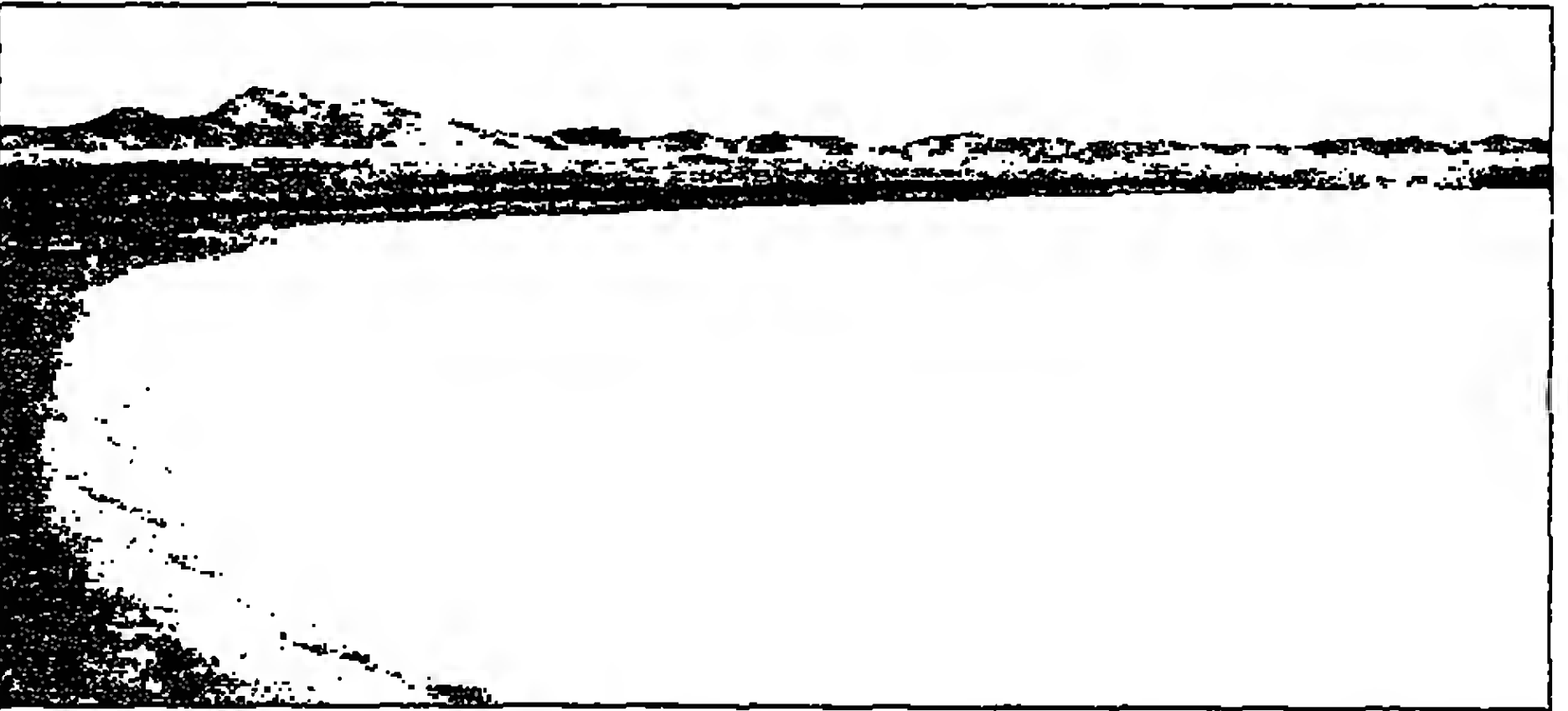
in arid land agriculture, the first of its kind in the Middle East," Mr. Shahbaz said.

The Bedouin expressed their greatest delight in the undertaking of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, a core of army engineers, and the JBRDP to provide water to the desert inhabitants.

A water harvesting method has provided inhabitants with a 35,000 cubic metre pool of clean water, as Mr. Shahbaz demonstrated to journalists.

The four metres of water are capacious enough to provide water for livestock, irrigation, and consumption, he said.

Constructing a smaller pool to entrap sediment, the method uses rain water and helps protect the limited underground water as well



A water harvesting method has provided inhabitants with a 35,000 cubic metre pool of clean water (photo by Yusef Allan)

as enrich it, Dr. Amarin said.

"It is the cheapest, key resolution to providing the region with water," he said. "We are implementing ideas put forth by the experts."

Samureh Ashortait, a Bedouin who lives near the pool and has tribal claims to the land, praised God, the King, and the Crown Prince for allowing the Badia project to flourish.

He said that 10 to 15 cars arrive daily to draw water from the pool, and he ensures that none allow their livestock to enter, in order to keep the water clean.

Mr. Shahbaz affirmed that Mr. Ashortait's "diligent protection of the pool showed that the Bedouin are learning from their activities."

"This is our objective, to help people work together, share resources, and develop community spirit," he added.

Future plans include the development of eco-tourism, solar-powered batteries for domestic use, medicinal experiments with native plants, the establishment of a maternal-child care clinic, and a Swiss soil conditioner combined with basalt from the area, Mr. Shahbaz said.

The Badia Programme has been initiated under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hassan as well as The Duke of Kent, and run by Jordan's Higher Council for Science and Technology, the Royal Geographical Society together with the Centre for Overseas Research and Development at Durham University.

U.K. parties step up poll campaign

LONDON (R) — With only five days to go to Britain's general elections the two main parties stepped up their increasingly bitter campaigns Saturday, trading charges that the other could not be trusted in power.

The opposition Labour Party, striving to maintain a large opinion poll lead, Saturday hammered away at what it sees as a key weakness of the ruling Conservatives — voters' fears that it could put tax on food and other essentials.

But Prime Minister John Major warned that the vibrant economy his party had created would disappear if Labour's Tony Blair replaced him after May 1, raising public spending, introducing a national minimum wage and giving trade unions greater powers.

He told a morning news conference that a Blair victory could mean "our economic miracle gone, the lowest taxes of major European countries gone, the

lowest unemployment gone, low inflation, low mortgages gone."

The two parties united on only one thing — their determination not to allow the Irish Republican Army to disrupt Thursday's poll.

Following a spate of incidents on the British mainland, the government has sent election officials instructions on how to deal with any bomb threats they may receive.

An opinion poll in the Daily Telegraph showed Labour — vying to win power for the first time in 18 years — still 16 points ahead of the Conservatives, unchanged from Thursday.

If Labour can maintain the double-digit lead it has enjoyed in every poll apart from one during the five-week campaign, Mr. Blair will be prime minister with a huge parliamentary majority.

But the Conservatives dismiss the published polls, claiming that on the doorstep the election is a far narrower race.

Labour concentrated its news conference on what it called "the Tories' tax addiction" — Value-Added Tax (VAT). The Conservatives broke a 1992 election pledge by putting VAT on domestic heating fuel.

Labour treasury spokesman Alistair Darling claimed that if the Conservatives won again staples such as food and fares on public transport would be the next targets for the tax.

"A vote for the Conservatives Thursday is a vote for a party which has an instinct to extend VAT," he said.

Mr. Blair left Mr. Darling and other middle-ranking Labour politicians to deal out the insults, telling journalists on a campaign train: "An end to divisions — that is going to be my message over the next few days. No more divided country, no more divided society, no more divided government."

Conservative efforts to stage a dramatic last-week recovery in their electoral fortunes were hampered by

newspaper reports of a rift at the top of the party over campaign tactics.

Mr. Major denied as "nonsense" reports in the Times and Guardian that he had personally taken over direction of the campaign, overruling key strategists by highlighting the issue of Britain's relations with the European Union.

The Conservatives are deeply split over the planned single European currency, with hundreds of candidates rejecting Mr. Major's "wait and see" line.

There was also a minor embarrassment for the Conservatives when the pro-Labour Daily Mirror revealed that deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine's private charity had illegally given £1,000 (\$1,620) to a Conservative ball.

"There was obviously an administrative oversight which I gave instructions to have removed the minute you drew it to my attention," Mr. Heseltine told a Mirror journalist.



Rwandan refugees, father and son, await their fate at a military camp controlled by Zairean rebels seven kilometres from Kisangani town. They were among a group of thirteen refugees found at the camp after thousands of refugees fled their camps near the town (Reuters photo)

Rebel noose tightens around Zaire capital

KINSHASA (R) — Zaire's beleaguered government has accused neighbouring Angola of invading territory to the west of the capital as it faced continuing rebel advances to the east.

State radio Friday quoted a presidential statement as saying thousands of traders and local inhabitants had fled the Zairean village of Yema, close to Muanda on the Atlantic coast and about 400 kilometres west of Kinshasa.

The statement said the village was invaded early this week by 1,400 heavily armed soldiers of the Angolan army. Angolan troops were also around Tshikapa, further inland, it said.

With rebels advancing on the capital from the east to topple President Mobutu Sese Seko, the commander of the elite Presidential Guard (DSP) urged his troops to "fight to your death" to defend Mr. Mobutu and the nation.

"Our mission is to protect the head of state, his family, the population, and the whole nation," General Nzambi Ndale told troops at the Tshatshi Military Barracks which surrounds Mr. Mobutu's Kinshasa residence.

"You want to sell the country away? You don't remember that this is our ancestors' land? You have to defend the country and fight to your death," he railed at the troops in his televised speech, alluding to the tendency of Zairean soldiers to flee at the slightest sign of rebels.

The DSP, Zaire's best-equipped soldiers, are concentrated in and around Kinshasa. Most are from Mr. Mobutu's Nbandi tribe, including Gen. Nzambi who is a close relative of the president.

Rebel leader Laurent Kabila, whose forces have seized more than half of the vast country, said the battle for Kinshasa would come "sooner than expected and will be very, very swift."

"The force will be big and the firepower overwhelming and necessary to contain the notorious army," he told Reuters in Zaire's second city Lubumbashi Friday.

The Luanda government has been increasingly linked to Mr. Kabila's six-month-old campaign to topple Mr. Mobutu who for years backed Angola's UNITA rebels.

For several weeks diplomats and local newspapers have reported the threat of rebels invading areas west of Kinshasa from Zaire's southwestern neighbour, in an attempt to sever the capital from supply routes from its one Atlantic Ocean port.

Diplomatic efforts to bring Mr. Mobutu and Mr. Kabila together before the war

reaches the sprawling capital stalled once again Friday as the two protagonists drifted further apart over the venue for the meeting.

Mr. Mobutu's son and spokesman Nzanga Mobutu said his father would have no objection to going to Gabon for talks. Mr. Kabila said talks should take place "where security is 100 per cent guaranteed" and named South Africa and Zambia as the only options.

In New York, diplomats said Bill Richardson, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, was expected to pay a surprise visit to Zaire in an effort to get peace negotiations started.

They said Mr. Richardson was likely to leave early in the week and that he hoped to see both Mr. Mobutu and Mr. Kabila.

Meanwhile one tragic side-effect of the war continued to grab world attention as tens of thousands of Hutu refugees in rebel-held territory were still missing from a camp feared to have been attacked by the Tutsi-led rebels.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan accused the rebels Friday of carrying out a policy of "slow extermination."

"The secretary-general feels that many innocent people are victims of a policy of slow extermination," Fred Eckhard, Mr. Annan's spokesman, said.

"As long as (access) is being intentionally impeded you have to say people are being intentionally allowed to die."

Mr. Kabila sent aides to northeastern Zaire Saturday before flying in to face the U.N. aid agency's outrage at the fate of nearly 100,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees missing in thick jungle.

The row over the treatment of refugees scattered from at least two camps south of the northeastern capital Kisangani is the biggest international crisis for Mr. Kabila's seven-month rebellion.

Senior officials of his Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) left Lubumbashi to prepare for their leader's arrival by plane later Saturday.

"It is a mission to gather first-hand information on what is happening there with regards to the refugees," an official said.

Mr. Kabila told Reuters he would go to Kisangani from Zaire's second city Lubumbashi to direct a hands-on investigation.

"The visit of Kabila will provide us with the opportunity to take up his offer of access to U.N. agencies and to seek an overall solution," said U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesman Paul Stromberg.

Jospin slams snap poll in France

PARIS (R) — French Opposition Socialist leader Lionel Jospin Saturday renewed criticisms of President Jacques Chirac's decision to call a parliamentary election as the centre-right coalition struggled to justify the snap poll.

Campaigning in south-west France, Mr. Jospin predicted an opposition win in the May 25-June 1 National Assembly election, saying there were no compelling reasons for bringing forward the vote from the original date of March 1993.

"The French people will surprise in this election. And that's normal because they've been surprised without getting an explanation," Mr. Jospin said in Labarthe Sur Leze.

The latest opinion poll showed the race is wide open for the National Assembly election, where the centre-right now has 80 per cent of the seats.

"Jacques Chirac's gamble is proving risky," said Pascal Perrineau, politics professor at the Sciences Po Institute, saying that voters had been disappointed by a lack of explanations for Monday's dissolution.

Conservative Chirac has said the vote is a chance to give France a new impulse

and let it join a single European currency from a position of strength. The European Union (EU) is set to debate which nations can join in early 1998.

Francois Leotard, head of the Union for French Democracy (UDF) which is the junior partner in the ruling coalition, said the election gave France the chance for greater stability.

"A country that is governed by zig-zags, by parentheses, by cohabitations, is a country that has a hard time defending its interests," he told the daily Le Figaro.

The National Assembly election would allow the government, if it wins, a new five-year term that will match the five remaining years of Mr. Chirac's seven-year term.

But it is only the fifth time that the National Assembly has been dissolved early since 1958 — and the first when France is not facing a major crisis.

The Socialists charge the government is secretly planning a new bout of austerity to prepare for the currency, the euro. The government has said it will not change its current economic course.

Mr. Jospin noted the election meant the National

Assembly had suspended consideration of a bill aimed at reducing poverty in France — one of Mr. Chirac's main campaign promises two years ago.

He said he "regretted" that this dissolution was made over the body of this law on social cohesion. "We will take up this legislative plan very quickly if we return to power."

The bill aims to create 300,000 minimum-wage jobs over five years, build houses and to help combat unemployment of 12.8 per cent, a post-war high.

Prime Minister Alain Juppe was campaigning Saturday in the south-western city of Bordeaux, where he is mayor.

Veteran Trotskyite Arlette Laguiller, doggedly preaching proletarian revolution despite the end of the cold war, entered the campaign with a rally Friday blasting both Mr. Chirac and Mr. Jospin as symbolising austerity policies.

Ms. Laguiller, who won about five per cent in the 1995 presidential election, noted that both favoured the euro and EU integration that she said would allow "capitalists to raise their profits at the expense of the workers."

China executes 3 Uighurs for riots

BEIJING (R) — China has executed three people and jailed 27 others for their roles in bloody riots that shook the Muslim region of Xinjiang in February, local officials said Saturday.

The Yili District Intermediate Court had sentenced the men in a public rally Thursday for participating in riots in the far-northern town of Yining that killed nine people and injured 198, a local media official said by telephone.

"They were executed the same day," said the official, who declined to be identified.

All of the convicted men were members of the ethnic Uighur minority, he said.

Xinjiang, a vast region that is home to many Turkic-speaking peoples such as the Uighurs, has a long history of ethnic unrest and has recently been rocked by Muslim separatist violence.

The men had been sentenced for the crimes of malicious wounding, arson and hooliganism in the anti-Chinese riots that erupted in Yining on Feb. 5-6, local television said in a report monitored by the BBC Saturday.

One man was sentenced to life in prison and 26 were given jail terms ranging from seven to 18 years, the report said.

The television report had quoted a local Communist Party official as saying at the rally that a "handful of serious criminal offenders" had "burnt vehicles and houses and killed public security policemen and innocent people."

Officials said last month they had ended hearings for six men on trial for their part in February's anti-Chinese rioting, which began as a demonstration for Xinjiang independence and turned violent.

Uighur militants say they want to set up their own state of "East Turkestan" in Xinjiang.

Chinese authorities earlier this month rounded up more than 10 people for allegedly organising a string of deadly bomb attacks in Xinjiang's capital of Urumqi.

Milan City Hall bomb casts clout over Italy elections

MILAN (R) — A bomb blast damaged Milan City Hall Friday ahead of local elections in which the post of mayor of Italy's financial capital will be the biggest prize.

The dawn explosion blew a hole in the back wall of the city hall and caused some damage to the council chamber itself as well as shattering windows in adjacent buildings, police said.

No one was injured but Interior Minister Giorgio Napolitano said the device, consisting of gunpowder and bolts packed into a steel container and left on a windowsill, had been powerful enough to kill.

"It shows that at this moment there are hotbeds of violence in Italian society that we have to confront," he told reporters.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

It was carried out on the anniversary of Italy's 1945 liberation from Nazi German occupation and the remnants of Italian fascist dictatorship at the end of

World War II.

Politicians from across the main spectrum said the choice of date and the timing ahead of Sunday's municipal elections in Milan and more than 1,000 other towns and cities appeared to be an act of intimidation.

Prime Minister Romano Prodi visited the scene and also noted the coincidence of the attack with the anniversary, marked in Milan by a march by 30,000 people, and Sunday's vote.

A suspect device, which was apparently harmless, was also found Friday outside the office of a local radio station.

Police said the metal tube, hidden in a bag, carried the words "don't vote" and was signed "Revolutionary Action." They said it was too soon to link the incident to the bombing.

The race for mayor of Milan is the highest profile contest in Sunday's elections, the biggest test of voter support since Mr. Prodi's centre-left Olive Tree Coalition won a general election victory on April 21 last year.

The key candidates in Milan are incumbent Marco

Formentini of the separatist Northern League, Aldo Fumagalli of the Olive Tree and industrialist Gabriele Albertini of Milanese media magnate Silvio Berlusconi's centre-right Freedom Alliance.

A run-off is likely on May 11 between the two top contenders from Sunday's poll with Mr. Formentini seen by many political analysts as risking defeat on the first round in what would be a blow to the League's prestige.

Sunday's elections in Milan and elsewhere, including the big northern cities of Turin and Trieste, will be largely influenced by local concerns, according to analysts.

But they say political parties are bound to try to exploit the outcome for national advantage.

Mr. Prodi's government has faced popular resentment by inflicting tax hikes on Italians in its bid to help the country meet the tough budgetary criteria needed for membership of Europe's planned single currency.

Jupiter-like planet found far from Earth

WASHINGTON (R) — A huge, hot planet about the size of Jupiter has been discovered orbiting a star far from Earth, bolstering the notion that other planets like ours exist, scientists reported Friday.

The big planet was spotted orbiting Rho Coronae Borealis, a star in the constellation Northern Crown, about 50 light-years — 480 trillion kilometres — from Earth, according to the scientists.

The orbiting body is much closer to its star than Earth is to the sun, and this implies that its temperature would be more than 500 degrees F (about 260 degrees C), much too hot for liquid water to exist and therefore not a likely place for life to form, the

researchers said.

"This discovery helps show that giant planets like Jupiter may be reasonably common around ordinary stars," said Robert Noyes of the Smithsonian Institution's Astrophysical Observatory in Cambridge, Massachusetts, one of three institutions sharing the discovery.

"It is exciting to think that there may be many smaller planets much more like the Earth in Orbit around these stars, as in our own solar system," Mr. Noyes said in a statement.

In the last two years, astronomers have found what they believe to be about a dozen planet-like bodies outside the Earth's solar system.

Pope urges religious revival in Czech Republic

HRADEC KRALOVE

Czech Republic (R) — Pope John Paul II called Saturday for a revival of religion in the Czech Republic, saying four decades of Communist persecution had left the faithful feeling like the early Christians.

On the second day of his weekend trip to the country, the 76-year-old Polish Pontiff flew by helicopter to this 12th-century town, 100 kilometres east of Prague, to give mass before a rapturous crowd of some 50,000 people.

"The church needs you," he told the crowd of mainly young people in his sermon as they braved a constant drizzle to see him in a square framed by Baroque buildings and the town's Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.

He evoked memories of his youth during the World War II era in neighbouring Poland, urging young people to follow his example and turn to God when they were in difficulties.

A sea of yellow and white Vatican flags went up as he was driven through the square in a bullet-proof "Popeamobile." Security was very tight, with all participants having to pass through airport-style metal detectors to enter the square.

"After 40 years of attempts to silence her, she (the Church) is experiencing here among you a wonderful revival, even in the midst of many difficulties," he said.

"You are living in a situation that, under certain aspects, is like the situation of the first Christians," he said, adding that today's young people had to begin spreading the faith anew.

Relations between the Catholic Church and the state in the former Czechoslovakia, which split peacefully in 1993 into the Czech and Slovak republics, were among the worst in the former East Bloc. Many of its leaders were harshly persecuted, its churches closed and priests arrested.

The crowd interrupted his sermon repeatedly with chants of "we love you," bringing smiles to his face. He joked several times with the young people as they applauded.

The Pontiff, who has suffered a series of health problems in recent years, appeared in relatively good form, reading his sermon in Czech in a strong voice as the rain fell.

However, his left hand shook in what is widely believed to be a sign he is suffering from Parkinson's disease.

The Pope issued a fervent appeal to Czechs to seek forgiveness from each other and from God for what he called "the evil" of the past, saying this was the only way to start on a new path.

"Sooner or later, we have to seek forgiveness," the Pope said, celebrating mass from a large wooden altar platform bedecked with flowers in front of the 14th-century cathedral.

Some in the crowd came from Slovakia and Germany as well as from the Pope's native Poland, around 300 kilometres away.

"It was very important for me to bring my son here," said Tomasz Jankowski, 24, from Katowice in southern Poland. "Times are uncertain and we must be close as people," he added.

The main purpose of the trip is to mark the 1,000th anniversary of the death of St. Adalbert, who brought Christianity to Bohemia, now part of the Czech Republic, and to Poland.

St. Adalbert, born in the Hradec Kralove diocese, is seen by the Church as "an apostle of Europe" and the Pope is expected to use a mass Sunday in Prague to evoke the saint in a call for the continent to seek unity based on its common Christian roots.

Canada Liberals head for majority, new polls show

OTTAWA (R) — Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien's Liberals prepared for a federal election campaign Friday with polls showing them far enough ahead to assure them another majority government if voting trends held.

A poll by Gallup Canada put the Liberals ahead of all others combined at 55 per cent of decided voters, 40 points ahead of the nearest competitor.

Mr. Chretien has laid the groundwork to announce his election call in Ottawa Sunday for June 2 and fly to his hometown of Shawinigan, Quebec, for a rally that night — and was busy this week making speeches that sounded very campaign-like.

"The election call will be Sunday," a government official confirmed.

Another survey published Friday gave the Liberals a margin of nearly 30 points.

It was done by Ekos Research Associates between March 18 and April 9 showed the Liberals backed by 41.7 per cent of voters versus 12.2 per cent for the second-place Conservatives.

It was based on interviews with 1,535 people from a panel of 3,000 randomly selected to participate in a project financed by some federal government departments, provincial governments and the private sector. The survey did not give a margin of error.

The Gallup poll, conducted from April 10-16, carried a margin of error of 3.1 per cent age points 19 times out of 20.

It put the Conservatives at 15 per cent, the separatist Bloc Quebecois at 11 per cent, the right-wing reform at 10 per cent and the leftist New Democratic Party (NDP) at 9 per cent.

This marked a switch of three points to the Liberals from the Conservatives since the last Gallup poll a month earlier.

"Jean Chretien's federal Liberals continue to hold a comfortable lead in the hearts and minds of Canadian voters," the polling organisation said.

In 1993 Mr. Chretien swept to 177 of the 295 seats in the House of Commons, and Gallup said he should get another majority if these numbers held until

voting day. Nonetheless, 35 per cent of Canadian voters remained undecided, giving some room for play for the opposition.

The Ekos survey put Reform at 10.6 per cent of respondents, followed by the Bloc at 8 per cent and NDP at 6.5 per cent.

The polls do not tell the whole story, since the strength of the Bloc and Reform are concentrated in Quebec and the west respectively, enabling them to hope once again for a plurality in a substantial number of seats as in 1993.

A Groupe Leger and Leger poll, commissioned by Toronto's Globe and Mail and Le Journal De Montreal, found the Liberals doing better than a month earlier but still trailing the Bloc among decided voters at 36.9 per cent to 43.1 per cent.

Mr. Chretien, who has presided over some of the toughest budget cuts in Canadian history, gave a good-news speech Friday in Toronto that hinted of new spending.



Turkish soldiers build a security wall at their camp near Tirana Airport. Around 4,500 soldiers of a multinational security force are currently stationed in the country (Reuters photo)

Albania force fails to satisfy local curiosity

VLORE, Albania (AFP) — Italian soldiers who made a dramatic landing here five days ago, are preparing for the long haul on a mission which still lacks focus and has yet to satisfy local curiosity.

Part of the 6,000-strong Multinational Force for Albania, 500 elite soldiers and 130 Greek troops, stormed ashore last Monday in a set piece show of force.

Arriving by landing craft and road, they came with tanks and armoured personnel carriers. The soldiers swiftly took control of the harbour and a looted military site which serves as their main base.

The move was intended to show that the Italians meant business in a town that for the last three months has been at the centre of Albania's violent unrest.

But since then, the troops have been keeping a low profile. Preoccupied with setting up camp in several locations in Vlore they have almost melted into the background.

An appearance in the centre of the town still attracts curious on-lookers who are confused as to precisely why the troops are here.

"I suppose they are some sort of insurance," said one woman warily as an impressive column of armoured cars rattled down the dirt track past her front door one day this week.

Like many towns in southern Albania where the rebellion against President Sali Berisha has greatest support, Vlore has fallen victim to widespread banditry. Following the looting of military bases at the height of the unrest, the area is awash with guns. Well-armed gangs terrorise the local population and prey on traders using the region's deserted roads.

Murders are now common place and not always because of rivalry between gangs. Over 300 people have died in the unrest nationwide, many of them in shooting incidents. Much to the confusion of local residents, the mandate of the U.N. approved eight-nation force is to protect humanitarian aid deliveries, not disarm bandits.

"We are happy that they have come but we don't know what they are going to do," said one man whose relative, recently shot by highway robbers, was flown to Italy for treatment by the force Thursday.

"The most important thing is that they work as a police force so that they can calm the situation. I think they should take guns off the people," he added.

Colonel Vincenzo Lops, commander of the Italian and Greek forces in Vlore, says his job is limited to escorting humanitarian food.

"We are almost ready to do our duty. We are waiting for some orders to carry out," he said, adding "by the end of the week I think we will have some mission."

In the meantime, signs of frustration among Vlore's hardhearted people are beginning to emerge. They are losing faith in the coalition of local leaders who came to the fore during the unrest. And they are still unsure about the new force.

The so-called Salvation Committee in Vlore has done nothing to prevent the crime wave, or nightly chorus of unnerving gunshot and explosions, let alone the piles of stinking rubbish that clog the port's side streets. "If the international troops are going to come here as tourists, then things are going to remain bad," said Arben, an Albanian

who declined to give his full name.

Speaking at a wake for a dead neighbour murdered by gunmen earlier this week as he tried to stop them abducting his daughter, Arben despaired at the troops. "If only they acted like police, then this type of thing would stop," he said.

But there is little likelihood of this. Their mandate limits them to protecting aid that few believe is really essential for Albania. Also, among the officers there is no desire to get bogged down in the Albanian quagmire.

"We cannot do this job for the Albanians," said one officer who requested anonymity. "We are here only to help the Albanians to help themselves."

For now, however, most assessments are that the Albanians are far from being in a position to do even this. "Presently the local authorities don't have the strength to stop this situation," Colonel Lops observed. Aid is supposedly on its way but for the moment the police remain demoralised and outgunned by the bandits.

U.S. disappointed at Russian Duma's delay on chemical pact

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States expressed disappointment Friday over a decision by Russia's parliament to delay ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention and said Secretary of State Madeleine Albright would raise the issue in Moscow next week.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said Russia's government backed the treaty. He called on the Russian parliament, or Duma, to ratify it as soon as possible.

"We're extremely disappointed in the decision by the Duma to put off debate and consideration of this treaty until the fall," Mr. Burns told a news briefing.

"We think there's absolute good faith on the part of the Russian government. The Russian government has indicated it does want to go forward and we would hope that the Russian government and Duma can work out whatever concerns the Duma has," he added.

Russia's parliament Friday resisted international pressure to ratify the landmark treaty, saying it needed more time and Western cash to destroy its deadly stockpile.

Instead of approving the treaty, the Duma decided to send a statement to the other participating countries saying it would aim to ratify it in a few months' time.

Lev Fyodorov, president of the Russian Union for Chemical Security, said it would cost at least \$5 billion to destroy the huge Russian stockpile of poison gas, the Interfax News Agency reported.

Russia and the United States possess the world's two largest chemical arsenals.

On Thursday the U.S. Senate — after considerable delay — approved the pact. It has been signed by 164 countries and is due to take effect Tuesday.

"We now hope, given the very decisive result in the

Senate last night, that that message will be heard in Moscow," specifically by the Duma, Mr. Burns said.

The 1993 treaty, which took years to negotiate, aims to ban the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical weapons worldwide.

The pact obliges members to eliminate all chemical weapons and production facilities by 2007. China and Iran have signed but not ratified. Non-signatories include Iraq and Libya.

Mr. Burns said the demand for more money was one that the Duma would have to address to the Russian government.

Washington in the past has assisted the Soviet Union and then Russia with funds for chemical weapons destruction from the Nunn-Lugar programme adopted by Congress.

Mr. Burns said he believed "there are sufficient monies from the international community, including

the United States" for this purpose.

But he left the door open for possible further assistance, saying funding is "an issue they (members of the Duma) should raise with the Russian government, and if the Russian government wants to raise it with us, we'll certainly listen."

Mrs. Albright will be in Moscow next Thursday for talks with Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov on NATO expansion plans. But Mr. Burns said the chemical weapons treaty will also be on the agenda.

Countries not ratifying by Tuesday when the treaty takes effect will not be eligible for membership in an Executive Council which sets rules for verification. So far 74 of the 164 states have ratified and the United States will be the 75th. Mr. Burns said Russia would be disadvantaged by not being part of this decision-making group.

Arsonists attack Catholic church in N. Ireland

BELFAST (R) — A Roman Catholic church in Northern Ireland was set on fire early Saturday in a suspected attack by sectarian gangs. It was the fifth Roman Catholic church to be set alight in the last month.

Elsewhere in Northern Ireland, seven people escaped injury in arson attacks on two houses in Londonderry city. Police said the motive was unknown.

Tension has been high in the province since Irish Republican Army (IRA) fighters, who are supported by some members of the Catholic minority, resumed a guerrilla campaign against British rule last year.

Protestant extremists loyal to London have launched several retaliatory attacks on random Catholics.

A security source said the blaze at St. Nicholas Church in Carrickfergus, north of Belfast, was discovered at around 4.40 a.m. (0340 GMT) and appeared to have been started deliberately.

Parishioner David Kane said the arsonists got in by removing wire-mesh security grills on a window and tried to light fires in seven different places. The roof and interior were damaged.

Over the last 16 months rival groups have been blamed for attacks on 56 Protestant and Roman Catholic churches and 45 town halls used by the divided communities.

Philippine hotel fire kills 24

COTABATO, Philippines (Agencies) — At least 27 people died and 15 others were injured when a fire raged through a six-storey hotel in the southern Philippines early Saturday, forcing guests to jump for their lives from windows.

A dozen survivors broke their legs as they leapt to escape the deadliest fire in the country since 152 young revellers were killed in a Manila disco fire in March last year.

Foreign diplomats had been booked to stay at the popular Imperial Hotel in Cotabato for a Muslim celebration starting Sunday.

"I jumped like Superman. Now, you see my legs are broken," local Muslim official Nur Baiman told Reuters while undergoing treatment at a local hospital.

The diplomats, mostly from Islamic countries, were due to join Filipino dignitaries at an address Monday by former Muslim rebel chief Nur Misuari, who now runs a Muslim autonomous region on the southern island of Mindanao.

Mr. Misuari later cancelled the event out of respect for the victims, including 10 of his supporters

who had come from remote areas to attend the celebration, his media office said.

Mr. Misuari, who signed a peace pact with Manila last year ending a 24-year Muslim revolt for autonomy, holds office in Cotabato, a largely Muslim city 900 kilometres south of Manila.

The fire, which gutted three floors of the hotel, broke out in a prayer room used by both Muslims and Christians.

It was unclear what caused the inferno, investigators said.

Officials gave conflicting tallies on the number of dead.

In Manila, the National Disaster Coordinating Council said in a report to President Fidel Ramos that 26 people had died in the fire.

But inspector Jaime Guadilla said the police body count was only 24. Funeral parlours also reported retrieving only 24 bodies.

Police earlier reported that 23 had died but Mr. Guadilla said one more body was found in a fifth floor room of the hotel.

He said the hotel registry listed an American but it was not clear if he was in the hotel when the fire

broke out. There were no indications a foreigner was among those killed, he said.

Most of the victims died of suffocation in the blaze, which raged for two and a half hours. Some were found in bathrooms where they apparently hid as flames engulfed the building, police said.

Witnesses said guests leapt through their windows, some wearing only their underwear. Some survivors by crawling down firemen's ladders.

Saudi Arabian preacher Al Daruis escaped by wrapping himself in a water-soaked blanket and running down a burning hallway on the third floor.

"I was fortunate because I was awake... I was praying," he said. "I smelt smoke and when I opened the door the hallway was full of smoke."

"I was asleep in my room when I woke up feeling as if I was choking," said Jimmy Malcampo, who survived after jumping through a third floor window.

"I rushed out of my room and saw the hall on fire. My choice was to die or jump out of the window. I jumped," he said.

U.S.-Japan summit dominated by security issues

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Security issues dominated talks Friday between U.S. President Bill Clinton and Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, with both leaders urging North Korea to join historic peace negotiations with arch-rival South Korea.

Mr. Clinton also assured that Washington was moving "in good faith" to ease the burden of U.S. military bases on Japan's southern prefecture of Okinawa.

where resentment toward the heavy concentration of U.S. military facilities has surged since 1995.

"The United States is very aware that our presence ... has imposed burdens on the people of Okinawa," Mr. Clinton said in a joint press conference.

He thanked Mr. Hashimoto for winning passage in the Japanese legislature of a measure allowing the U.S. military to keep using land in Okinawa despite opposi-

tion from local landowners. After the 1995 rape of a 12-year-old child by three American servicemen, a growing number of Okinawans have called for the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops by 2015.

Okinawa houses more than half of the 47,000 American troops in Japan and accounts for about 75 per cent of U.S. military facilities in Japan.

Both Mr. Clinton and Mr. Hashimoto urged Commu-

nist North Korea to enter historic four-party peace talks with the capitalist south.

"I implore the North Koreans to return to the talks," Mr. Clinton said, adding that "it was a big disappointment" when North Korea failed to show up at New York discussions on starting peace negotiations.

The United States and South Korea proposed the four-party talks, with the United States and China acting as mediators, one year ago.

Mexicans unearth important new archaeological find

MEXICO CITY (R) — Mexican archaeologists working in the ancient city of Teotihuacan have unearthed clay figurines that could be one of the country's most important discoveries, officials said Friday.

The pre-Columbian site, which dates to some time between 250 and 400 AD, included 50 clay figurines in perfect condition that are believed to reveal important

details about Teotihuacan culture.

"It appears to be a theatrical representation that upon being reconstructed shows the history of a person who surely played an important role in Teotihuacan society," archaeologist Jaime Delgado Rubio said in a statement from the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

The female figurines were lined up in a way that showed the lineage of a high dignitary, the institute said.

President Ernesto Zedillo, who took a personal tour Friday, called it "one more piece in the complex and rich history of Mexico," the institute said.

With origins going back before the Christian era, Teotihuacan was one of the first great societies of the Western hemisphere. Featu-

ring two towering pyramids, Teotihuacan, about 65 kilometres north of Mexico City, is one of the country's most famous archaeological sites.

The new find is in the southeastern end of the site, just off the "Avenue Of the Dead" opposite the Pyramid of the Moon.

Working since December, archaeologists so far have uncovered four levels within the site, the institute said.

aid them in evangelising their purist codes to Islamic and non-Islamic countries alike.

"We ask all the Muslims to help and cooperate with us in implementation of Allah's orders the world over so that the law of Allah be established and naive man-made law be abolished," he said.

In the two-thirds of Afghanistan under the control of the Taliban, women are barred from work and education, and men are forced to grow untrimmed beards and attend prayers regularly.

The harsh codes and methods of enforcement have invited a barrage of criticisms from human rights groups and foreign governments.

Meanwhile, Taliban forces in northwest Afghanistan have repulsed an attack by a rival faction and killed 15 enemy soldiers, state-run radio said Saturday.

"The Mujahadeen of the Islamic army pushed back an attack of the (northern warlord General Abdul Rashid) Dostum militia in border areas of Fariab and Badghis provinces," the Taliban mouthpiece Radio Shariat said.

As well as claiming to have killed 15 anti-Taliban fighters, the report said 12 soldiers loyal to General Dostum were captured along with heavy weapons after the battle Thursday.

"Two tanks as well as some other heavy and light weapons of the enemy have also been captured," the report said.

"The Mujahadeen of the Islamic army have taken a number of strong positions of the militia and are chasing the defeated enemy," it added.

No independent confirmation of the claims was available. The Taliban have been fighting Gen. Dostum — part of an anti-Taliban alliance — in the dusty northwestern province of Badghis since October last year, when they launched a drive to capture the warlord's northern and Muslim-moderate stronghold.

However the rival forces have been locked in relative stalemate along the Morghab River, despite regular reports of major attacks by both sides.

Gen. Dostum is a key member of the anti-Taliban alliance, which also includes the ex-government — ousted from Kabul September last year — and a Shiite party Hezb-i-Wahdat based in the central Massif of the country.

Some 100,000 refugees from the fighting in Afghanistan have fled to the country's northern border and could start entering Tajikistan, Russian Border Guards chief Andrei Nikolayev warned Saturday.

Russian news agencies said Nikolayev voiced "serious concern" that the situation on the border could soon deter-

orate, during a high-level security meeting in the Tajik capital Dushanbe.

Gen. Nikolayev said fighters from independent armed groups separate from the Islamic opposition could enter Tajikistan among the flow of refugees, and around 100,000 people had already massed on the border, Interfax reported.

Speaking at the same meeting with Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Border Guards commanders, Tajik President Emomali Rakhmonov said that if the Taliban militia seized provinces in northern Afghanistan, the number of refugees on the border could reach one million.

Gen. Nikolayev said there was "a real need to develop cooperation between all the border services in the region to ensure the security and defence of the southern borders of the CIS," the loose grouping of 12 ex-Soviet republics.

Mr. Rakhmonov stressed the need for "joint efforts to spread the expected flow of refugees," so that they did not all settle in Tajikistan.

Some 16,000 Russian troops are posted along the mountainous 1,100-kilometre Tajik-Afghan border, helping Mr. Rakhmonov's forces to keep out Islamic opposition guerrillas and stem the tide of refugees.

Afghanistan's Taliban dismiss critics, espouse evangelism

KABUL (AFP) — A senior Afghan Taliban official has dismissed criticisms of the hardline militia and has urged world Muslims to promote their strict interpretations of Islamic Law, it was reported here Saturday.

Taliban number three Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund said the militia would pay no attention to Western concerns over the purist group's human rights record, the official Radio Shariat said.

"We do not care about anybody as long as the religion of Allah is maintained," Mr. Akhund was quoted as telling a visiting delegation of Pakistani Muslim Academics.

"They won't be satisfied unless we obey them and turn our face from Allah," Mr. Akhund explained referring to Western critics of the militia's purist interpretations of Shariat (Islamic Law).

Mr. Akhund added that the militia would not bend their hardline codes in the face of outrage over human rights in the war-torn country.

"Propaganda is launched against us as if the Taliban do not observe human rights," he said.

"And who has given these rights to humanity? Of course Allah has given them and we never deviate from or ignore these rights," Mr. Akhund asserted.

Mr. Akhund issued an appeal to Muslims of the world to

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Hostile pattern

THE PATTERN of voting at the U.N. General Assembly on Friday over Israeli settlements in the West Bank did not surprise any observer of the Middle East conflict and the ongoing peace process. The U.S. and Israel — joined this time by Micronesia — as always, voted against the resolution that called on the Jewish state to immediately halt building a new settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim close to East Jerusalem.

The issue of the Israeli settlement on Abu Ghneim was debated at the Security Council in two sessions in March. There and then, and as always has been the case, the U.S. jumped to the defence of its ally and vetoed both resolutions.

This steadfast stand by the side of Israel is leading to a great deal of frustration in the Arab World both at the official and popular levels.

The U.S., which assumes the role of the only sponsor of the peace process and refuses to allow any of its allies in Europe to contribute to peacemaking in the region, is defying the international community by deflecting any pressure on Israel to yield in its policies that are endangering the whole peace process.

Not only is the U.S. position undermining the Palestinian people's rights in the West Bank and Jerusalem, more so it is complicating the ongoing process itself and contributing to the contention in the Arab World that the U.S. cannot and will not be an honest broker of peace in the region. That in turn leads to putting the leadership of Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinians under tremendous pressure from dissatisfied populations that now feel more and more betrayed by the promise of peace, tranquillity and prosperity that was spearheaded by the Americans and propagated by the Arab leaders themselves.

Despite the fact that the unbinding General Assembly resolution sent a strong message to Israel — 134 states voted for it — Israel once again feels secure to continue its policies of colonising Jabal Abu Ghneim and other places in the West Bank. This in particular will make it very difficult for the Palestinians to resume negotiations in a situation where Israel seems bent on going along with its plans to prompt the final status negotiations by predetermining the fate of the occupied Palestinian lands.

The U.S. does not only have a moral responsibility towards the Palestinians and Arabs but also has an interest in bringing about a just and comprehensive peace to the region. Peace is not only a prerequisite for a stable and prosperous region but also an essential element in protecting and ensuring American interests in the whole area.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily said Saturday that the celebration by Al Baath political party this month of its 50th anniversary was marked by praise for the party leaders but contained no criticism whatsoever of the party's failures or unaccomplished objectives. Fahed Fanek said that the celebration, part of which was manifested on Syrian television, failed to mention why this party has failed to unify the Arab countries, as it set itself to achieve in general and to unify Syria and Iraq, which are ruled by similar ideologies, in particular. The writer said one had expected to see self-criticism, especially as neither in Iraq nor in Syria can one see political pluralism but rather one-party rule which dominates the political, cultural, informational and economic aspects of the state. Unfortunately, the Baath Party, which had great ambitions and which was supported by the majority of people in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and other countries, has been exploited by the rulers who nationalised private sector properties and gave them to loyal military officers to manage. He said it is unfortunate to see this party, which embraced the concepts of Arab revolution, Arab unity and freedom, being transformed into a tool of repression.

A WRITER for Al Ra'i Saturday decried the massacres committed by criminal groups in Algeria and called on the Arab and Islamic countries to interfere and help put an end to the people's ordeal there. Dismissing all claims by forces hostile to Islam that the massacres are being committed by Islamist extremists, Salah Jarrar said nothing in the Islamic faith justifies the murder of women and children, as this religion preaches tolerance and peace. The writer said that the massacres are either committed by certain criminal groups in the pay of nations hostile to Islam and the Arab Nation or extremist religious or ethnic groups that went astray from Islam in the past centuries and are now active to take revenge on Islam and the Muslim and Arab people, taking advantage of the present disarray in the Arab and Islamic ranks. He said that since the massacres committed in Algeria harm the image of all Arabs and Muslims, and since the victims are totally innocent people and are helpless in the face of this atrocity, there can be no alternative to a concerned Arab-Islamic intervention and prompt action to put an end to this horrible situation.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Middle East market, normalisation jeopardised by 'facts on the ground'

WHEN SHIMON Peres, the former Israeli prime minister floated the idea of a New Middle East and a Middle East Common Market, the response in the Arab World was a sort of civil war among Arab intellectuals who were sharply divided over the idea. The majority rejected the Israeli proposal and took steps to resist this impending danger which was dubbed as an Israeli economic invasion to achieve expansion by other means.

Those Arab intellectuals who took issue with the Middle East market proposal can be divided into two groups: one, ideologically motivated, rejects the very idea of making business with Israel under any set of circumstances; they deal with the issue as a matter of principle. The other group is pragmatic. It is against allowing Israel to enjoy all the fruits of peace before it complies with all its conditions. Economic cooperation with Israel, in their view, is possible, but only when Israel withdraws from all occupied Arab territories in the West Bank, Syria and Lebanon, and accepts the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital. This group of intellectuals and politicians sees economic cooperation as a valuable Arab card which should not be surrendered free of charge.

The democratic earthquake which took place in Israel in

the summer of 1996 and brought an ultra right government led by Benjamin Netanyahu, turned the political map of the region upside down.

The Likud government simply does not want to cooperate with the Arabs or open up commercially to the Arab World. It is no more calling for a Middle East Market. It prefers to look inside and strengthen the iron curtain which separates Israel from the Arab World. In short, it keeps the fortress mentality out of fear that it may melt in the Arab ocean.

Under the new circumstances, it is only natural for the heated Arab cultural civil war over the Middle East Market to cool down. After all, the New Middle East project is no more on the table and is not promoted by any party.

Although the concept of a New Middle East is almost identical to the concept of normalisation, the battle over normalisation continues unabated.

In certain cases, the anti-normalisation movement practises what could be described as intellectual terrorism, using classifications and labelling against some Arab intellectuals who dared to engage in a dialogue with their Israeli counterparts. This happened in Egypt, and to some extent in Jordan, over the so-called Copenhagen Declaration which should have caused an outcry in Israel

rather than in the Arab World. Actually, the Israeli public opinion tolerated the Arab-Israeli Alliance for peace, depending on intellectuals on the Arab side to rise and kill the declaration on ideological grounds.

The Copenhagen Declaration called for the Palestinian people's right of self-determination, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, the strict adherence to, and the full implementation of, the Palestinian-Israeli accords, reached in Oslo and Taba, the halting of Israeli settlement operations in the West Bank and Gaza, and aiming at a Middle East as a region free of all mass destruction weapons. As far as Jerusalem is concerned, the declaration called for an agreed formula, acceptable to all parties.

Both normalisation of relations and the concept of a prosperous Middle East were aborted not because of the resistance of some Arab intellectuals but because of the policies and behaviour of Mr. Netanyahu and his right-wing government. The building of the Har Homa settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem was instrumental in bringing the Arab-Israeli relations back to square one, not only at the level of intellectuals but also at the level of politicians who cannot ignore the facts on ground and their peoples' sentiments any longer.

'Taking the road to peace is risky, but not taking it is unthinkable'

By Yuval Rabin

The writer is the son of the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. He is chairman of the new Israeli grass-roots social movement, Dor Shalom. The article below is reprinted from the Newsweek.

THE FANATIC who shot my father on Nov. 4, 1995, was really aiming to kill the peace process. His bullets still ricochet. Until that day, I was content to let my father tend to politics while I pursued my career in computer science. But his assassination taught me that it is every citizen's responsibility to defend democracy through participation. As the Talmudic Rabbi Hillel taught: "Do not separate yourself from your community." That is why I have helped launch a non-partisan grass-roots organisation called Dor Shalom, the "Peace Generation." We believe that only through tolerance and pluralism can Israel achieve domestic reconciliation, and only through regional peace can Israel

realise economic prosperity and security.

That hope is my father's legacy. I fear that today both sides have lost sight of what the peace process is all about. It is not a competition to even old scores, but an opportunity to work together to build new lives based on trust, reconciliation, mutual respect and security.

We can be the first generation in modern Israeli history to bring up our children in an era of peace. But that peace is by no means guaranteed. Oslo is a commitment to work together to build confidence and trust between two peoples. For us, it offers the hope of living within secure and recognised borders. Palestinians have a chance at self-government and self-determination.

We all know that the agreements signed with the Palestinians, starting with the famous White House handshake of Sept. 13, 1993, had stiff opposition from parties on both sides. It was obvious my father was uncomfortable shaking hands with (Arafat), but he

understood that he couldn't dwell on the past but had to look forward. After that day, the divisions were not so much between Israelis and Palestinians as they were between supporters and opponents of the peace process. Extremists on both sides promoted acts of wanton violence to destroy the process and the peace-makers. One of their victims was my father.

Today, it is our responsibility to ensure that the process survives. This means the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) must absolutely contain terrorism. Without that, the peace process may die in the rubble, trampled by a mob. Whatever their disagreements with the government of Israel, the Palestinians must have no doubt that violence is a wholly unacceptable negotiating tool.

Israel's leaders and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu must demonstrate a genuine commitment to the peace process they inherited and which the Israeli people support. Netanyahu's conflicting

policy decisions have sent dangerously mixed signals that jeopardise the process. On the one hand, he agrees to the redeployment of Israeli troops in Hebron, on the other, he proceeds with the construction of controversial housing in East Jerusalem's Har Homa, predictably fuelling Palestinian extremists. The prime minister applies narrow legal justification for his acts. My father looked beyond the letter of the law to consider the implications. Yitzhak Rabin knew that it is not enough to be right; leaders must also be wise.

In his inaugural address, my father declared it is time for Israel to understand that the whole world is not against us. Today our prime minister seems intent on reversing that view, even at a time when the Clinton administration is the friendliest in history, when Israel's international isolation is ending and when the Arab World is opening diplomatic and commercial relations.

In Washington last week, Netanyahu made it sadly

clear that he is proceeding with Oslo only because he is legally obliged to, not because he wants to. Netanyahu came to office on a catchy slogan, "Secure peace." He borrowed the concept from my father, who was delivering on his promise when he was cut down by an assassin: sadly, under Netanyahu we have neither security nor peace.

There are no sound-bite solutions for the situation in which this government has cornered us: however, here are some commonsense suggestions:

— Begin by applying the principle of Yitzhak Rabin: dwell not on the past but on what we must do today for the future.

— Declare immediately a rhetorical ceasefire and move rapidly to a physical one.

— Begin at once government-funded construction on promised Arab housing in Jerusalem, and suspend work on Har Homa until the Arab project catches up.

— Keep negotiating channels open at all times.

— Proceed with final sta-

tus negotiations right away.

— Move quickly to open the airport and seaport at Gaza, as well as safe passage routes between Gaza and Palestinian PNA areas of the West Bank.

— Proceed immediately to transfer more territory to the PNA, particularly those with shared security responsibilities.

— Both leaders must meet immediately to declare openly their renewed commitment to the peace process.

— President Clinton should use his moral authority to get the process back on track.

Israel today is at a critical crossroads and sorely needs leaders with the courage and vision to take it forward with hope and bold determination, not fear and doubt. An entire generation from both sides demands peace and is determined to achieve it. As Yitzhak Rabin proved with his life, it takes more courage to make peace than war. Taking the road to peace is risky, but not taking it is unthinkable.

'Total freedom of academic expression should be ensured'

By David Newman

The writer is professor of political geography and director of the Humphrey Institute of Social Research at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. The article below is reprinted from The Jerusalem Post.

RECENTLY THE end of the three-month period since Ze'ev Begin resigned from the post of science minister was marked, and the academic community is still awaiting the appointment of a full-time successor.

As a cabinet minister, Begin was unique in that he did not allow his political views to intervene in his conduct of policy concerning the development and expansion of scientific enquiry and research.

Since the Netanyahu administration came to power, the academic establishment has been attacked several times by government circles. In an interview with Ha'aretz last November for example, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused the academic community of not allowing a full and free debate of different viewpoints.

At the time, he stated that he would support the establishment of alternative institutes of higher education in which these view-

points would be given full airing.

It is possible that Netanyahu's views concerning the academic community have been influenced by his own personal experience.

His father, a noted historian, has argued that the reason he left Israel to reside for a long period of time in the U.S. was that he was unable to obtain tenure employment at one of the Israeli universities owing to his political background and personal views. Moreover, Netanyahu's own book on terrorism has not been greeted with the same enthusiasm among the academic community as it has in some diplomatic and political circles.

It would not be farfetched to suggest that these experiences have created a personal image of an academic community which is highly politicised and leans strongly to one side of the political spectrum.

This is not a new theme. We have heard it all before: The established universities are full of left-wing intellectuals who support the Palestinian cause and are not implicitly, sufficiently faithful to the "national" cause. The stereotype is further enhanced by their collective portrayal as being secular, post-Zionist, and too open to the universal ideals of human rights

and equality, as opposed to the exclusive rights of the Jewish people.

The right wing has always had it in for academics and the media. It has constantly sought to delegitimise and to silence ideas which challenge the accepted hegemony of the Jewish state and which raise uncomfortable questions concerning the Jewish-Arab relationship.

Since the right does not have the answers, it is always much easier to simply dismiss the proponents of new ideas as being anti-Zionist and not sufficiently loyal to the state.

"In the life of humans, as contrasted with particles and neutrons, there are no absolutes. Human behaviour is not black-and-white. Rather it is many shades of grey which can change with the passage of time, or as a response to different social and political situations."

But herein lies a paradox. During the past two years, the only group of academics which has publicly organised into a political group has been the ultra-right professors for a strong Israel. It has taken out full-page advertisements in the press decrying the evils of the Rabin and Peres gov-

ernments. Its members use their status as academics to sell the political message with which they identify. During the past six months, a group of these academics has held several public meetings with the prime minister as a statement of their political affiliations and identity.

The Israeli academic community is as pluralistic as the rest of society. Were a survey of political affiliations to be conducted, it is likely that the humanities and social sciences would display a large majority for the left, as contrasted with

among academics.

Why should this be the case? I would suggest that it is partially due to the fact that the exact sciences require absolute answers. There can be no question marks or alternatives.

Positivist modes of enquiry require that one answer be right and that all other answers be wrong. This is similar to the right-wing way of political thinking.

There can be no question marks or unanswered questions. Everything is black-and-white — the Oslo accords are national suicide; the world hates us; we are alone and should not delude ourselves into thinking that we can make treaties with former enemies, who wish nothing other than our destruction.

Not only do the social sciences and humanities allow for questions to remain unanswered, they actually promote this form of thinking. In the life of humans, as contrasted with particles and neutrons, there are no absolutes. Human behaviour is not black-and-white. Rather it is many shades of grey which can change with the passage of time, or as a response to different social and political situations.

Changed political circumstances raise new questions which cannot be answered by a simple yes or no. To prove their efficacy, they

have to be allowed to work their way through a passage of time and experimentation. Such is the historical evolution of society as we know it.

And again, many social scientists have to deal directly, in their research and teaching, with issues of current or historical political concern. Each day of enquiry reveals new documents, new interpretations of political and military events, which then have to be translated into reality.

A simple example: Government documents from the late 1940s call into question the nature of the Palestinian refugee problem. But those who use these documents to show that we were not as "pure" as we have always been taught to believe, are branded as left-wing, post-Zionist intellectuals.

It is this form of discussion which the new government is attempting to replace with its own official version of Zionist history and politics.

If we are to prevent this Orwellian future from taking place, we must act to ensure the total freedom of academic expression. We must reject all forms of academic manipulation by a government which is afraid, perhaps incapable, of dealing with the burning social and political questions of the day.

مكتبة من الكتب

Features

Jordan Times, Sunday, April 27, 1997

In ancient birthplace, Egyptian monks revive desert tradition

By Anthony Shadid
The Associated Press

WADI NATRUN, Egypt — Dressed in the flowing black robe of his 1,600-year-old tradition, Father Agathon casually reaches for a ringing cellular phone tucked away in his pocket.

He is quick to hand out his business card, printed in English and Arabic, and nonchalantly volunteers a fax number.

The Internet? Don't get him started.

Father Agathon is a monk, an initiate of a tradition born in Egypt's deserts in the 4th century who is at ease with the accoutrements of modern-day society.

In a stunning revival, he

and hundreds of others have helped transform their monasteries — the world's oldest — from lonely outposts on the verge of extinction into pilgrimage sites, retreats and modern communities that play an important role for Egypt's Christian minority.

Eleven of the 12 major monasteries have seen their numbers grow dramatically, some witnessing a tenfold increase in just 20 years.

The rush has forced abbots to turn initiates away. Those who do enter are remarkable for their education: doctors, dentists, engineers, businessmen.

While the growth of Islamic activism captures

attention in Egypt, a phenomenon in many ways parallel but less visible has emerged among the country's Christians. They account for 10 per cent of the population and belong mainly to the Coptic church, an indigenous Orthodox Church that traces its origins back to St. Mark.

Coptic Christians have become targets for extremist Muslims, but the monasteries are largely away from towns, where the radicals are active, and have not been attacked. A few monasteries are even revered by some Muslims as holy sites.

Their revival in the desert is the most tangible sign of a growing Christian fervour, encouraged by

a resurgent church as an answer to society's materialism.

"We're looking for the holy life. We're looking for a place in paradise," a sun-burnt Father Deucoros said. "Outside everyone is running for money, looking for money. But here you are free."

Father Deucoros is one of 66 monks at St. Anthony's Monastery, a desert redoubt near the Red Sea renowned as the world's first. It was founded by disciples of its namesake, one of the earliest and most influential hermits, who died in 356.

Nestled against a jagged, barren mountain, it is surrounded by stretches of scraggly terrain once inhabited by leopards and

wolves. The monastery was so isolated that only a monthly camel caravan supplied it. Visitors were pulled up by rope and a basket over the wall that kept out marauding bedouins.

Some of the monks, practising a vow of poverty, obedience and chastity, lived for years on bread and water in nearby caves.

Today, a two-lane ribbon of asphalt connects the monastery to the outside world, turning what once was a three-day journey into an afternoon drive. The monks have set up guest houses for the hundreds of visitors who come to see the churches, flour mill, garden and spring.

St. Anthony's has four times as many monks as it

did 20 years ago, most of them educated men in their 30s and 40s.

"We are like a candle in the darkness," said Father Deucoros, who left his job at a Cairo bank to become a monk 15 years ago.

The Coptic Church recruits its patriarch and bishops from the monasteries, and some monks are sent to serve in churches elsewhere in Egypt and abroad.

Their vow is a lifetime obligation — they give up their names, grow beards and don a black robe as part of a spiritual rebirth.

Prayers start as early as 4 a.m. And work can last until the evening. The monks' soft chants can sometimes be heard out-

side, fading into the Muslim call to prayer in nearby villages.

The revival is not just in numbers. The monasteries themselves have undergone a revolution as younger and more educated monks experiment with agriculture and animal husbandry, introducing new crops and breeds of cattle to their neighbours.

The monastery of St. Macarius, in a desert valley west of Cairo known as Wadi Natrun, is the best example.

In 1969, the Coptic Church ordered a priest and 12 monks to leave their desert caves and settle at the crumbling monastery.

They rebuilt the compound, a stunning clash of

Islamic, Byzantine and modern styles, and greatly expanded the grounds.

The monks now number 105, many of them courtiers, veterinarians or agricultural specialists. They grow watermelons, wheat, olives, dates and bananas on 400 hectares reclaimed from the desert. Farm buildings, house, cows, sheep and poultry and a printing press publishes a monthly magazine.

Not uncommon is the sight of a bearded monk in black robe and hat driving a tractor with tanned hands on the wheel.

"Worship must be an investment," said Father Yohanna. "The religious life shows itself in work, not in words."

Russian Orthodox Church seeks way out of shadows

By Philippa Fletcher
Reuters

MOSCOW — Russian Communism may be in its death throes, but in a quiet central Moscow backstreet you can still see signs of the flights of fancy it inspired as it strove for immortality.

A shabby telephone exchange, housed in a former church ransacked by the Bolsheviks, is decorated with stained glass windows and statues. They depict figures which look like angels or saints, except that they are talking on the telephone.

In a dusty, windowless basement underneath the exchange, a group of people taking a break from their work laugh at the ill-fated attempt by their former atheist leaders to hijack Orthodoxy's powerful symbolism.

"It was part of the Soviet pseudo-religion," says a bearded young man, sipping a cup of coffee.

Halfway through building a chapel in the basement, he and the rest of the group, Orthodox believers who met in private under Communism, aim to reconquer the church from the ground up.

After years of struggle with official red tape, the tide is turning their way. But not everyone is ready to rebuild the church from the grassroots in a country unused to democracy.

"Now the old world is being resurrected as successfully as it was destroyed 70 years ago. Moscow is gradually becoming a grandiose eparchy," said the Moskovsky Komsomols newspaper.

Some fear new Orthodox tide all over Moscow, the state is handing back churches built as a backbone of tsarist society and turned into warehouses, barracks, schools and hospitals during a bloody crackdown on religion after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution.

There are those who fear the new Orthodox tide, pointing out that the church has never been

independent from politics in Russia and arguing that nationalism and crime are also seeping in, disguised, like the telephoning statues, in religious garb.

Church officials argue firmly for a separation of church and state, saying that the pre-revolutionary marriage was not a happy one. But in practice there are close links.

On Easter Sunday the capital will dust off its new religious face when politicians and other prominent figures gather in the vast, newly rebuilt cathedral of Christ saviour for the Orthodox Easter.

The ornate cathedral, hastily shedding its scaffolding in time for the ceremony, is just down the road from the telephone exchange, but the much of the congregation will be a world away from the dedicated crowd expected to pack the airless basement.

Russia's leaders, mostly distinguished former Communists, have flocked to the church's side in the years since the old system collapsed, hoping to harness one of their battered country's strongest cultural and historical symbols.

The church's power is not lost on ambitious Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, who has done much to persuade businessmen clamouring for lucrative contracts in the capital to help rebuild the cathedral destroyed by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin.

"Cathedral of Christ the Saviour — symbol of Russia's rebirth," say posters displayed around the capital.

Trading privileges granted by the cash-strapped government to help the church back onto its feet also raised big sums before being discontinued amid controversy over their use.

Despite a continuing shortage of funds for church repairs and charitable activities, some priests feel uncomfortable about such fundraising at a time when business is still linked in many people's minds with corruption and



A woman lights a candle in an Orthodox cathedral in Moscow. All over Moscow the state is handing back churches built as a backbone of Tsarist society and turned into warehouses, barracks, schools and hospitals during a bloody crackdown on religion after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution (Reuters photo)

mob rule.

"All entrepreneurial beginnings are controversial, in the church too, so I think it is better for the church not to get involved," said parish priest Father Vladimir.

He knows what he is talking about. He was conducting a funeral service for a local businessman in his parish in Pushkino outside Moscow when he was shot by the graveside, caught in the crossfire of a gangland settling of

accounts.

Other religions practising in Russia are more concerned by the nationalist leanings of the Orthodox Church.

Archbishop Sergei, patriarch of the Moscow Patriarchy, says the church does not want to stop other faiths serving their traditional flocks, but that they should not try to convert.

"Russia is an Orthodox country. Those are not just empty words, not just an interpretation, but a deep

historical layer, therefore we are against proselytism," he said in an interview.

"Thank God the tendency, unity and there's not that widespread splitting which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union," referring to the explosion of sects in Russia in the early 1990s.

Then thousands of young people got sucked into exotic and sometimes dangerous cults by people

recruiting on the streets, feeding on a spiritual hunger, poverty and a legal vacuum.

They are still around, although nowadays those approaching strangers are more likely to be selling timeshare holidays.

Other faiths long established in Russia — Baptists, Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists among them — say the anti-sect paranoia sometimes works against them, with officials refusing

them space to worship on the advice of a local priest.

"There is already in some places the understanding that the Orthodox Church must give permission to all other confessions which is not right," said Father Viktor from the Vatican's representation in Moscow.

"Many people say that if someone is Russian then they must be Orthodox but that's not written down in any law and the lord gave people freedom of

choice," he said.

Father Vladimir, whose hugely popular predecessor Alexander Men was killed by an unknown assassin in 1990 in what many see as a last Communist blow against the church, says Orthodoxy must break the Russian tradition of trying to crush dissent.

"This is the only way for the Orthodox Church to develop to the point when it is no longer afraid," he said.

Lada-lovers come out of Finnish wilds

By Roland Moller
Reuters

HELSINKI — It's loud, it's uncomfortable and it's about as trendy as Stalin. The story goes that taxi drivers who crashed their cars here were forced to drive one purely for the humiliation.

Being seen driving a Lada was a punishment so cruel it prevented many accidents, taxi drivers say.

Undaunted, the boxy, spitting Russian car — sold in millions in Russia and once a key trading link between Finland and its eastern neighbour — is cruising to cult status.

Different car philosophy

Finland's Lada enthusiasts are not the kind one associates with the country's international rallying success — the

standard 1996 Lada 1700i, with an 84 horsepower engine, hits its max at a stately 155 km per hour.

"This is a totally different automobile philosophy than Mercedes, Volvo or BMW," says Mauri Salo, editor of the automobile and technology magazine Tekniikan Maailma.

"A city type with a corporate credit card wouldn't think of driving a Lada, but for Finnish rednecks on the countryside, it is a totally natural choice."

Faced with tightening supplies as Russians scramble for spare parts for the cars, which have changed little since the

first model trundled off Soviet production lines in 1971, Finnish Lada owners are starting to organise.

Nearly 200 so-called "Ladaists" last month staged Finland's first Lada derby, a weekend of races and fond tales in the southwestern town of Kangasala.

It also featured a cult documentary film capturing — with characteristic dryness — the very Finnish nature of this Lada love affair. Its title: "If Lada were a car."

Finns do not use words like "the" or "a", which have no place in their language, but talk simply of Lada. That seems further to magnify the little

car's cult potential. "If Lada were a woman, I wouldn't be married," remarks one fan in the film.

Two Ladas for the price of an Astra

But the fans are completely straight-faced when they list their reasons for liking the Lada.

A new Lada 1700i today would, in Finland, set you back \$9,770, compared with \$13,200 for the next cheapest type of car — a 1.0 litre Suzuki Swift — and \$13,300-14,300 for the smallest west European models.

For the price of an Opel Astra, Finland's

best-selling model, you could get two Ladas.

And, fans say, a Lada is the most reliable car they can find, easy to repair, tough, cheap to run — and warm.

Ladas are well suited to the sub-Arctic climate: winter temperatures in the north regularly drop as low as minus 40 degrees Celsius.

Owners say their Ladas start no matter how cold the weather, and are among the few available with a decent heating system.

"This car is very warm. Look at Mercedes and Volvos," said one enthusiast. "The ladies in them wear fur coats."

Originally based on the

Fiat 124, the rear-wheel drive Lada carries its engine at the front and can be a slippery drive in icy conditions, but true Ladaists solve that problem by simply pouring a load of sand into the boot.

Specialist market

Nonetheless, as befits any cult, the Lada is not likely to become a best-seller.

They used to be a key product in Finland's barter trade with Russia, but never topped new car sales in Finland. In Lada's 1970s and 1980s heyday, its market share here was 12 per cent.

"The biggest obstacle

for many were the children who could not bear peer pressure and preferred any rusty Ford Taurus to a brand new Lada," Mr. Salo said.

"Lada had such a bad reputation, like all Eastern Bloc cars. People said if you can't afford a car, buy an eastern car."

However, importer Konela Oy says around 10,000 Ladas were sold in Finland every year through the 1970s and 1980s.

Now about 1,000-2,000 trundle over the border each year, snapped up by a choosy few who see cars as simply a way — albeit a noisy one — to get from a to b.

Anti-corruption drive bearing fruit, World Bank head says

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A World Bank drive to stamp out corruption in its projects has generated "a tidal wave" of interest around the world and is already bearing fruit, bank President James Wolfensohn declared here Friday.

Mr. Wolfensohn, who announced the campaign last September in a surprisingly frank speech, disclosed that the bank had carried out "spot audits in certain parts of the world" and had warned national leaders that projects would be cancelled if corruption were found.

"I think this thing is going like a tidal wave in terms of interest," Mr. Wolfensohn told a press conference ahead of a meeting Tuesday of the bank's 24-member development committee. "In every country where I've been going, the 'C' word has become a subject for discussion at the highest level," he said. "The very fact that we've taken this stand has already tightened things up significantly."

The bank has begun to work with national lead-

ers in a dozen countries — which he would not name — that are tackling corruption head on, Mr. Wolfensohn said.

But he stressed that it was the responsibility of national leaders to root out corruption, with the bank limited to a supportive or advisory role. "If it's not cured at the top, corruption is not going to be cured," he argued.

Mr. Wolfensohn said his administration had also taken concrete steps to implement a far-reaching overhaul of World Bank operations that has just been approved by its executive board.

"We are engaged now in what we said we were going to do. We've done a massive reorientation of management, we have a lot of retraining going on and we have a new set of guidelines that are being introduced in each of the regions in terms of speed with which we get the job done," he added.

The bank aims to spend up to \$400 million in the next 30 months to streamline its activities and increase the speed with which it delivers

services — notably by shifting resources from administration to "front-line operations."

Part of the reorganisation calls for the elimination of up to 700 jobs at a cost of between \$100 to \$150 million.

Already, according to Mr. Wolfensohn, "the rate of our spending has increased."

"We've cut out a lot of deadwood. We're starting to feel that our portfolio is much more under control," he indicated.

The overhaul, which the bank refers to as a "compact," will be on the agenda Tuesday when the development committee — made up of finance ministers from 24 countries — convenes here.

The committee advises the bank executive board on the transfer of resources to developing nations.

Mr. Wolfensohn said the group would also discuss efforts to smooth the way for private sector involvement in infrastructure projects through the bank's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency

(MIGA).

The agency, created in 1988, has so far issued 225 contracts to guarantee some \$15.5 billion in foreign direct investment in 44 developing countries.

Private investment flows to the developing world are this year valued at \$230 billion, largely surpassing the \$55 billion in official flows.

But Mr. Wolfensohn noted that 80 per cent of the private investment goes to 12 countries. One hundred and forty countries get less than five per cent and sub-Saharan Africa — apart from South Africa — receives less than one per cent.

"The distortions are enormous," he said.

"The role of the bank ... is essentially to try to get those countries (currently left out of the flow pattern) in a position where foreign investors are prepared to take the risks to invest," he emphasised.

What the bank can do, he added, is to promote improvements in national, legal, judicial and security systems.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NGG	FRF
US Dollar	1.7270	0.6161	1.4685	126.25	1.3976	1720.88	1.5430	5.8295	
DE Mark	0.5790	1.0000	0.6305	65.54	0.7363	166.07	1.4300	5.3753	
GB Sterling	1.5230	2.8020	1.0000	166.07	1.7537	2.2683	2792.59	3.1535	9.4613
CHF Franc	0.8846	1.6175	0.6103	1.0000	1.4835	1.6614	171.45	152.67	3.3683
JP Yen	0.0073	1.3674	0.4877	1.1627	1.0000	1.1066	117.45	153.84	4.6156
CAD Dollar	0.7115	1.3352	0.4466	1.2064	0.9034	1.0000	107.17	139.25	4.0000
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0034	0.3579	0.0853	1364.82	0.8120	1.0000	11.29	3.3686
NGG Guilder	0.2147	0.6936	0.2188	0.2423	0.6820	0.7491	100.48	1.0000	2.3696
FR Franc	0.1715	0.2862	0.1056	25.1622	21.63	0.2397	33.32	33.3200	1.0000

Energy		
Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	18.35	18.45
WTI	18.25	18.35
Bony	18.35	18.45
Debel	18.35	18.45
UL Gas	153.00	158.00

Mid-East Currencies				
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4606	0.16429	0.3917
AE Dirham	0.2776	0.4707	0.16778	0.3988
KW Dinar	3.2885	5.68182	2.02675	4.83225
OM Rial	0.3776	0.6466	0.2327	0.5455
CY Pound	1.9374	3.3459	1.1633	2.8451

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	342.2	342.7
Silver (oz's)	4.75	4.78
Platinum (oz's)	377.7	378.7
CU (5 Months)	2383	2385
CU (3 Months)	2383	2385
Lead (3 Months)	633	637
NI (3 Months)	7475	7500

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)					
Period	1 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 9	9 - 12	Year
USD	5.56	5.71	5.93	6.12	6.31
DEM	5.56	5.71	5.93	6.12	6.31
JPY	0.53	0.55	0.44	0.62	0.68
FRF	3.30	3.44	3.54	3.56	3.58
ITL	6.99	6.98	6.93	6.86	6.87

Main Equity Indices						
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low
New York	DOW JONES	6738.87	-53.38	-0.79	6792.25	6726.03
New York	S&P 500	1029.56	-8.24	-0.79	1041.35	1026.15
London	FT-SE 100	4369.7	-18.5	-0.43	4385.7	4363.5
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	18522.36	-132.31	-0.71	18654.8	18377.4
Paris	CAC 40	2536.28	-3.57	-0.14	2550.08	2526.66
Frankfurt	DAX	3377.1	-25.26	-0.75	3392.74	3372.26

Energy		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	220.33	Spot
Cocoa (c/lbs)	148.7	Spot
Sugar (c/lbs)	318.5	Spot
Wheat (c/lbs)	17.7	Spot
Soy (c/lbs)	24.7	Spot
Tea (c/lbs)	34.5	Spot
Barley (c/lbs)	0	Spot
Rice (c/lbs)	1.0	Spot

* JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
DE Mark	0.4084	0.4114
FR Franc	0.1211	0.1217
NL Guilder	0.3636	0.3654
IT Lira	0.2168	0.2182

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, APRIL 28, 1997

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) An acquaintance may want you to help him or her out of a serious difficulty today, however don't risk your own security to assist this person. Later this evening would be a good time for just relaxing with your loved ones.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Avoid people who list to disagree, as they could easily upset you today and make your life miserable. Pay attention to the state of your health and appearance, so that you can get noticed by those in authority who can be helpful with your success.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) If you mate is in a bad humour today, keep silent and use patience to avoid a disagreement, which could cause work being exchanged which you later both will regret. This is a good time to catch up on your reading or writing.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) If you allow a demanding fellow associate to upset you today, you could make a costly error which could risk damaging your reputation. Don't try to force your opinions on anyone who doesn't want to listen.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Plan your schedule for the day today early this morning, and stick to it, don't run off any tangents which could cause distractions. A word of kindness later this evening can be very effective, so make yourself heard.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Be sure you have completed any obligations today before getting into new ventures. You should not allow anyone to pressure you into a risky scheme which could cause you to make a mistake with career activities.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You may want to get out of a long-standing obligation today,

however don't take any action which is unnecessary handle a chore for your mate later this evening if it bores you, thereby you can show your appreciation.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Don't get into a disagreement with a fellow business associate today, because if you do serious difficulties could result. Your judgment is not at its best at this time, so put off until another time and business decisions.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Try to be more efficient today in your daily activities. You may not like the ideas of a fellow associate, however listen to what is being said and don't say anything negative in his or her presence at this time.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Even if you are very eager for some recreational activities today, don't get into something which is too costly. Avoid people who like to spread gossip, since there could be a time when what is being said might concern you.

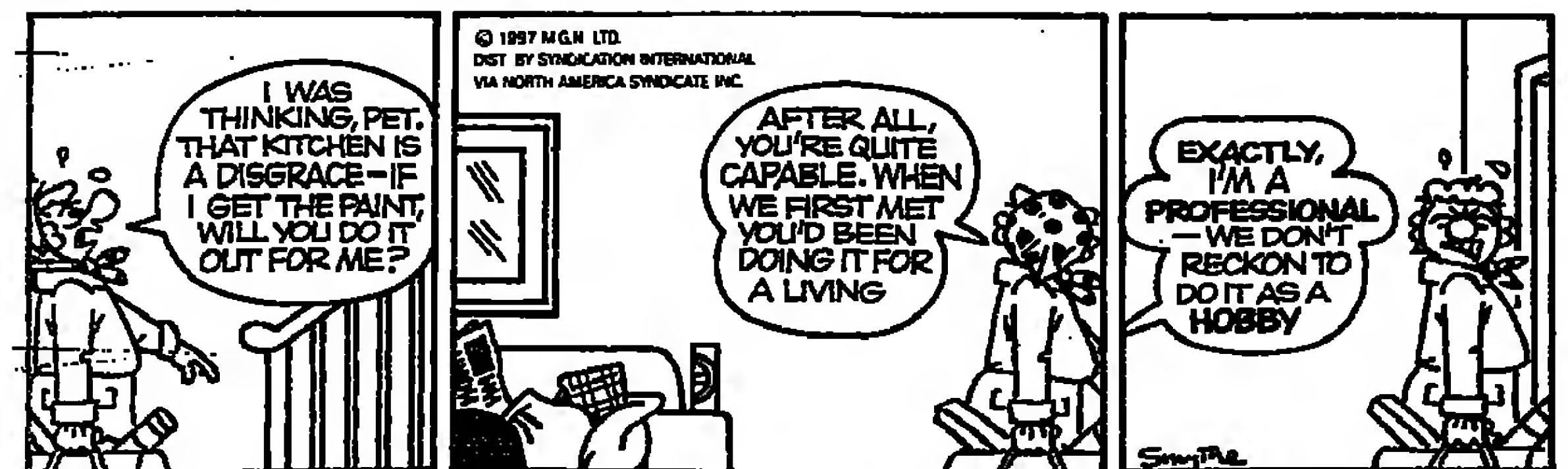
AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) If you are overly critical of a family friend today, a big disagreement result, so be constructive and tactful. This is a good time later this evening to revise your budget, thereby you will have extra funds in an emergency.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Much care in driving will be necessary today, especially on the highway. Make sure you use the correct words on the telephone so that you don't offend anyone, especially a bigwig who can make you quite successful.

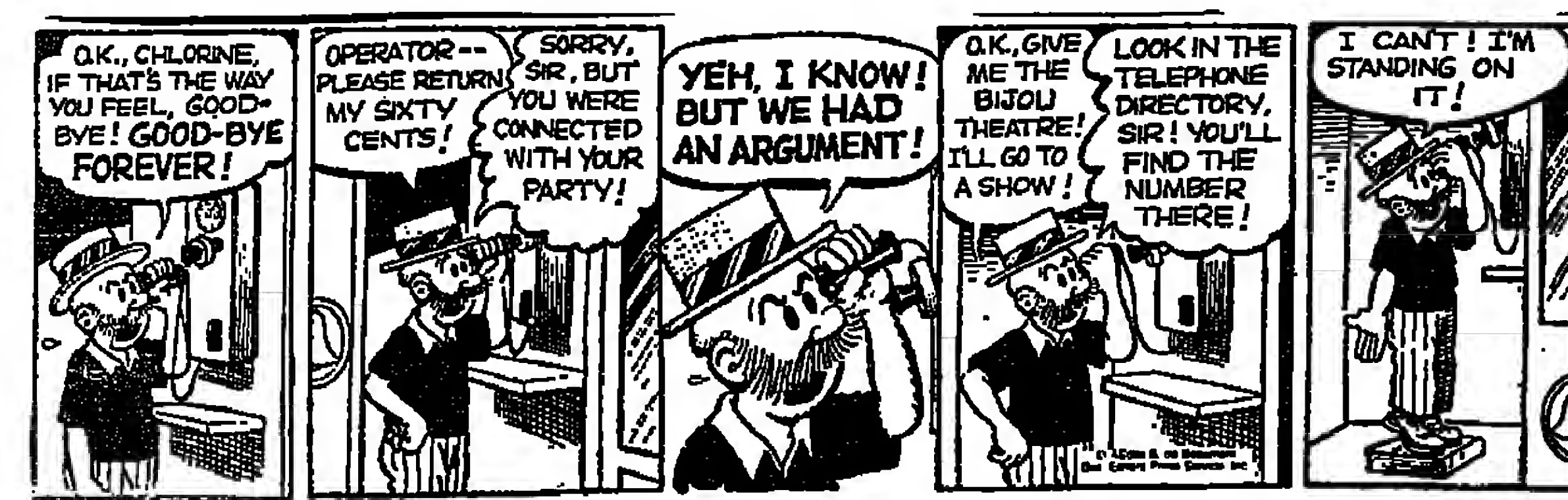
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

1 Lavish social event

5 Picture puzzle

10 On one's — (alert)

14 Wading bird

15 Madonna role

16 Kind of curve

17 What's left

18 Covered with hair

19 Famous fiddler

20 Revel

23 "Vive le —!"

24 Great happiness

25 One killed Cleopatra

28 Made one's own

32 Fall behind

35 Loafers

37 154

38 Self: pref.

39 Revel

42 Fish-eating bird

43 Country singer McEntire

44 Perfect

45 Lacrosse goal

46 Mamas and papas

48 Thirsty

49 Boy

50 Car of old

52 Revel

61 Landed

62 TV fare

63 Theater award

64 Sedimentary material

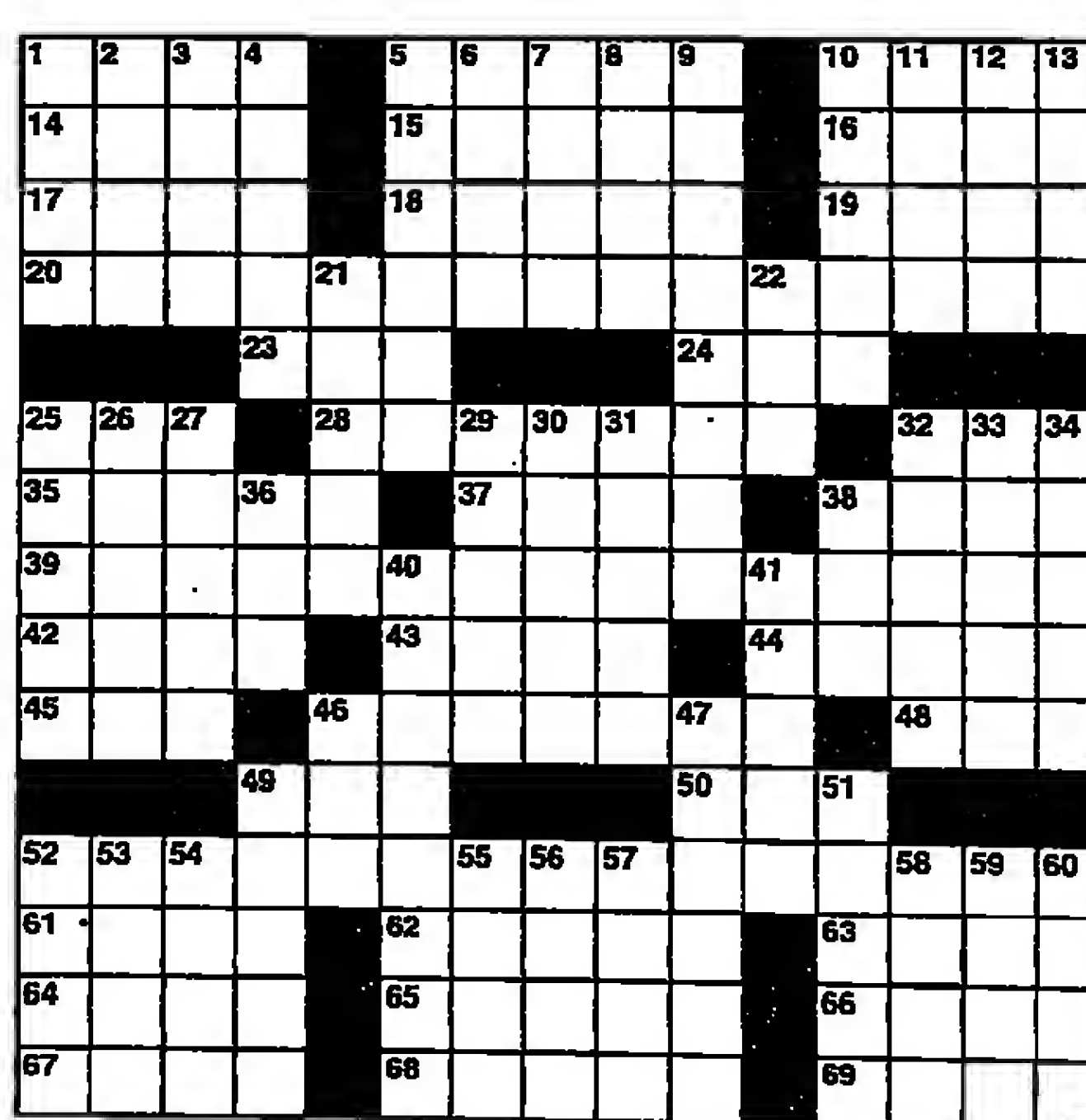
65 Atoll

66 Traveled by horseback

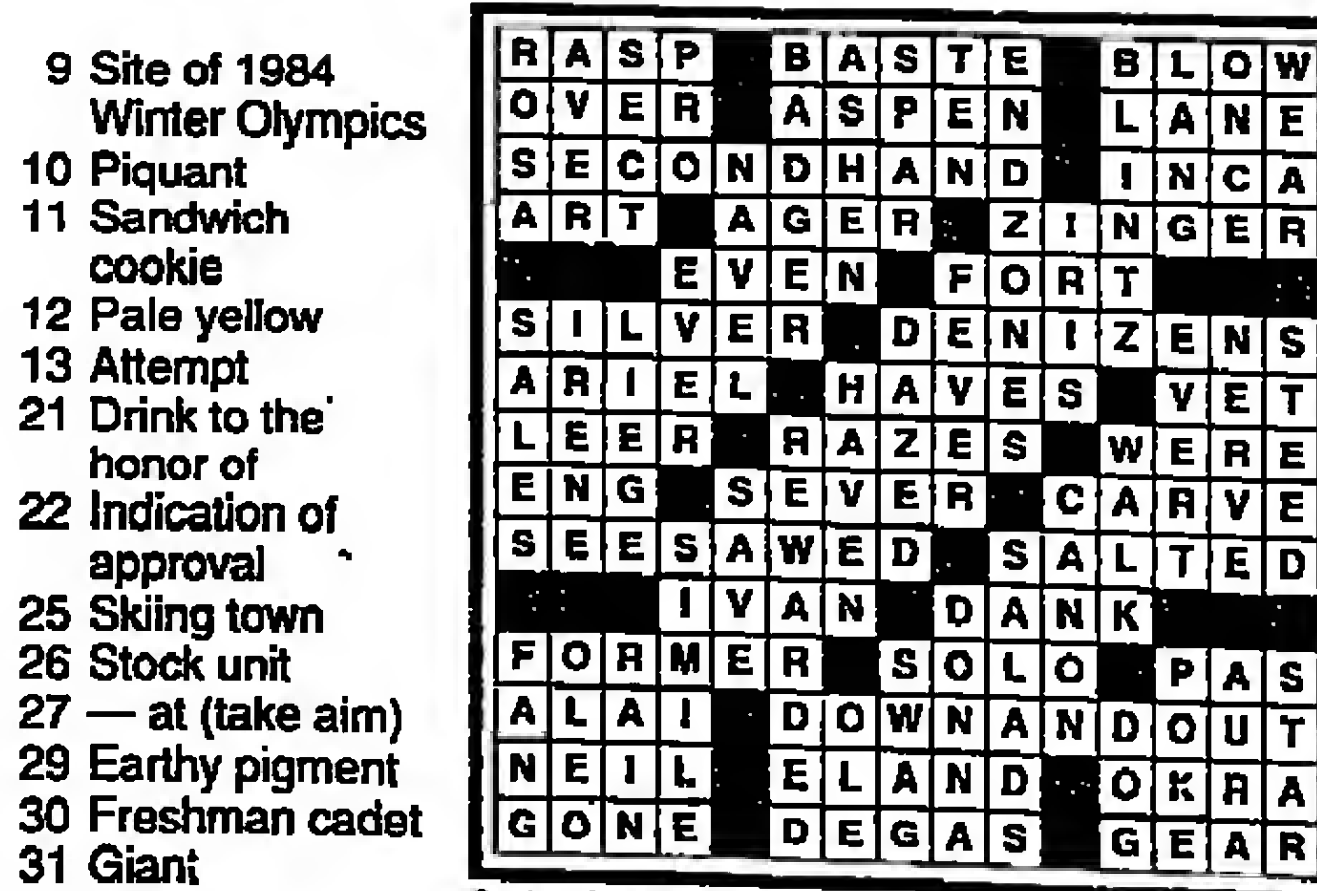
67 Luminous ring

68 — Dame

69 Ancestry



by Edgar R. Fontaine



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DOWN

1 Lass

2 — in one's bonnet

3 Itemize

4 Moving about

5 Gave back

6 Wicked

7 — of fare

8 Provo's state

9 Site of 1984 Winter Olympics

10 Piquant

11 Sandwich cookie

12 Pale yellow

13 Attempt

21 Drink to the honor of

22 Indication of approval

25 Skiing town

26 Stock unit

27 — at (take aim)

29 Earthy pigment

30 Freshman cadet

31 Giant

32 Attracted

33 Go on — (binge)

34 Divine

36 Vane dir.

38 In addition

40 What a new car buyer often does

41 More sapient

46 Look for gold

47 Sad: Fr.

49 Kin to bingo

51 Smells

52 Flog

53 Charles Lamb

54 Money drawer

55 Adequate

56 Sentry's word

57 Copycat

58 Woodwind

59 Expansive

60 Desideratum

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Curroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Taking the lead in social situation would be wise at this time, since you have the ability to be highly convincing and entertaining. Later this evening would be good to meet with knowledgeable people and obtain their advice.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You can please your loved ones enormously today if you do a few small favours for them. Don't let a small concern ruin your good mood later this evening with your mate and thereby you can create a harmonious situation.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Stay around people who are always agreeable and pleasant today, thereby you can make this a harmonious situation. Decide on what it is you want the most, and obtain it with the assistance of close friends.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) If you need a little assistance from people in positions of power today, state your ambitions directly and clearly, thereby you can get the help which you seek. Later this evening you can stay at home and relax with loved ones.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Plan a short, relaxing trip today which will help to relieve the tension you are under. Joining forces with new contacts would be wise, so follow through and you can make your efforts more successful in the days ahead.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Try to get your life arranged more efficiently today, and you can get ahead faster. Try to see things from your mate's point of view and thereby avoid any differences of opinion which could exist between you both.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You can either make a new contract with a fellow associate today, or revise an old one which will raise your status in business considerably. Later this evening will be good for meeting with close friends at fun recreation activities.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Get in touch with an efficient fellow associate and plan the week's activities wisely, thereby you can be quite successful. Tonight should be an especially happy one, especially by being with your loved ones.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22

Arab bond market set to surge

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states are increasingly tapping world financial markets by issuing bonds and the trend is set to gain pace, experts said Saturday.

"The growth of Arab bond markets is likely to be stimulated by three main factors," said Henry Azzam, chief economist and assistant manager of the National Commercial Bank, the biggest bank in Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Azzam, writing in the London-based Arab Banker quarterly magazine, said the privatisation of state enterprises in the region is contributing to the trend.

Bonds are also fuelled by restrictions on bank loans due to world capital adequacy-and-risk standards, and by companies' preference for issuing bonds rather than equity in order to retain more control over corporate decisions, he said.

Too many loans by banks may, in the long-term, lead to asset and liability imbalances as some borrowers could fail to repay on time, he said.

Also, recent guidelines by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) for banks worldwide stress the need for higher reserves in proportion to loans.

Mr. Azzam said: "Most Arab states are in the process of corporatising and privatising their major state enterprises. So, companies will be relying more on bonds than on direct bank loans."

"Since the intention is not to shed ownership control during the initial phase of privatisation, state enterprises will be encouraged to meet their financing needs by issuing bonds," he said.

Several banks and companies in the Arab World have recently issued bonds to raise funds from domestic and international markets.

Bankers and economists said the trend had gained momentum as countries in the region pressed ahead with plans to develop their stock markets and embarked on major reform programmes, including privatisations.

"Issuing bonds is an ideal alternative to direct bank loans. There has been a growing tendency toward bonds in the region," said Mohammad Asumi, chief economist at the state-run Emirates Industrial Bank.

"I think this will benefit regional institutions and give more depth to the stock markets," he added.

Among the biggest bond deals in the Arab World was a \$60 million issue in 1996 by the Bahraini Alba Aluminium Company, which has embarked on an expansion programme.

Morocco also issued about \$200 million in bonds last year for privatisations.

Lebanon also began to tap international financial markets when Credit Libanais, which is 97 per cent owned by the Lebanese central bank, borrowed \$60 million for three years in 1996.

"In most Arab countries, corporate financing is mainly in the form of loans solicited directly from banks," Mr. Azzam said.

"Yet, reforms which encourage greater issuance of debt securities to finance public and private sector activities indicate that this market is likely to grow significantly in the near future," he pointed out.

"The new capital adequacy requirements and exposure limit rules for banking lending are two reasons why bank lending will become more expensive," he said.

Mr. Azzam stressed more financial reforms were needed to ensure a successful bond market in the region, including improvement of legal structures and upgrading of information on economic performance in Arab countries.

"A major factor inhibiting growth of regional bond markets is the lack of institutional and legal infrastructure," he said. "An important prerequisite for financial deepening in the region is the development of legal systems."

Big U.S. tobacco firms hit by judge's ruling

GREENSBORO, North Carolina (R) — In a major blow to the tobacco industry, a federal judge ruled Friday that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) can regulate sales and labelling of cigarettes, but that it had no authority over advertising.

The 65-page ruling by U.S. District Court Judge William Osteen found that cigarettes could be regulated as drug delivery devices under federal law, something that the tobacco industry has fiercely opposed.

The ruling would place cigarette makers squarely under the FDA's jurisdiction and could force them to cough up more money if there is a negotiated settlement of the hundreds of lawsuits filed against the industry.

financial analysts said.

President Bill Clinton and anti-smoking groups hailed the ruling, though the president said the part of it dealing with advertising would be appealed.

Cigarette makers said the key issues had not been decided and that they would contest the facts as the case progressed.

"It's probably going to cost them a little more as a result of the ruling," Allan Kaplan at Merrill Lynch said. "It's obviously raised the stakes for the tobacco companies."

Tobacco stocks tumbled after the ruling. Philip Morris, the world's largest tobacco company whose brands include Marlboro, fell \$2.12 to \$39.50. RJR Nabisco Holdings lost \$2.75 to \$28.85 and Loews Corp., which owns Lorillard, fell \$1.50 to \$90.125, all on the New York Stock Exchange.

Richard Daynard, a tobacco litigation expert at Northeastern University, said the ruling would strengthen the hand of anti-smoking forces in ongoing talks.

"I think courts have mentioned nicotine as a drug in passing, but this is the first time that a court has ruled that nicotine is a drug," he said, adding that was the most important part of the ruling.

Mr. Daynard said the industry would have to make "serious concessions, to get any sympathy at the bargaining table" in the talks aimed at settling lawsuits against the industry.

Anti-smoking advocates in Congress hailed the ruling and predicted it would tighten the FDA's grip on the industry.

"We can give the FDA statutory authority," representative Henry Waxman, a Democrat from California, said.

But Senate majority leader Trent Lott, a Republican from Mississippi, told reporters: "My general disposition is no, the FDA should not have a role in regulating tobacco." He said he did not think the FDA was doing a good job and should be reformed.

In a joint statement, tobacco companies said the judge had not decided the constitutional issues they had raised and that they would contest the ruling.

test factual assertions made by the FDA in its regulations. They did not spell out whether they would appeal or not, though they had previously said they would.

The industry had challenged as unconstitutional new curbs on advertising and marketing of cigarettes imposed by federal regulators.

In the ruling, Judge Osteen wrote: "The court finds that tobacco products fit within the FDA's definitions of 'drug' and 'device'." FDA refers to the federal food, drug and cosmetic act passed by Congress in 1938. Tobacco companies say the FDA has "tortured" the law to give itself authority over tobacco.

Judge Osteen heard arguments in February that the FDA had overstepped its authority and was violating U.S. free-speech guarantees with its new rules limiting the sale and advertising of cigarettes.

The regulatory battle dates back to August 1995, when President Clinton authorised the FDA to regulate how cigarettes are sold and marketed in a bid to curb smoking by children.

The regulations struck down by Judge Osteen would have banned free samples and billboard ads near schools and playgrounds, limited vending machine sales and banned tobacco sponsorship of sports events and the use of cigarette brands on hats, T-shirts and other products.

The rules left standing, which came into force in February, require retailers to see photo identification for cigarette purchasers under age 27 and ban the sale of cigarettes to those under 18.

A spokeswoman for Florida Governor Lawton Chiles, whose state is suing the industry for \$1.4 billion spent treating tobacco-related illnesses since 1994, said the ruling "exposes the deception and hypocrisy of cigarette manufacturers."

Talks aimed at settling lawsuits against cigarette makers will probably resume late next week, Arizona Attorney General Grant Woods said Friday. He told reporters the talks would most likely resume next Thursday, but said he did not know where.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

General Investments Company doubles capital, distributes cash dividends at a rate of 15 per cent

A RECOMMENDATION by the board of directors of the General Investments Company to raise the capital of the firm was approved by an extraordinary meeting of the general assembly and, as such, the capital will be doubled from JD3.4 million to JD7 million. The capital increase will be achieved through capitalising the reserves and retained earnings as well as distributing free bonus shares.

At its ordinary meeting, the general assembly approved the board's recommendation to distribute JD510,000 in cash dividends to shareholders at a rate of 15 per cent. The General Investment Company (GIC) recorded JD6.44 million in total sales last year. This amount, which is 5.6 per cent higher than the total sales in 1995, boiled down to a JD2.53 million net profit after deducting all production costs as well as industrial and administrative expenses.

According to the GIC's annual report for 1996 total current assets amounted to JD2.67 million and total fixed assets stood at JD5.99 million compared to JD5.34 million in 1995. The shareholders' equity increased by 17 per cent to JD1.6 million. Other figures which appeared in the 1996 balance sheet show JD10.5 million of total assets, 11.7 per cent higher than the JD9.4 million total at the end of 1995. Of the JD5.99 million in fixed assets, the GIC holds long-term investments amounting to JD2.55 million.

Board chairman Farhan Abu Jaber told the general assembly that the company expects higher sales in 1997 due to the improvement in the tourism industry in the Kingdom and the noticeable increase in building new hotels and restaurants all over the country. He indicated that the GIC has started to export reasonable amounts of its products to the Palestinian self-rule territories during the last quarter of 1996 and he hoped the volume of exports would increase in 1997.

Mr. Abu Jaber pointed out that a tangible improvement was achieved in the sales of the Arab Beer Factories Company as they shot up by 51 per cent and boosted profit to JD255,397. In this regard, the beer company transferred all the GIC share of this profit and all the retained earnings up to 31/12/1995 to the account of the General Investment Company. As such, the GIC benefited from a total of JD494,192 transferred to it from the beer company which produces Amstel beer in Jordan.

The chairman said GIC paid the government a total of JD2.23 million being the amount of sales tax paid on the company's products. The company allocated JD1.84 million of its net profit in 1996 to the various reserves (Al Ra'i + Al Dustour + Al Aswaq).

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 26/04/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
269,000	213,000	ARAB BANK	11.7	1.58	2	80	20280	255.00	253.50	1.50	-
2,100	1,790	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	2	0.00	11	7808	14028	1.81	1.79	0.02	-
5,500	4,100	CALPO AMMAN BANK	9.3	3.33	3	2350	10575	4.50	4.50	-	-
2,480	2,120	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	8.4	5.02	3	1150	2703	2.35	2.35	-	-
5,100	4,250	THE HOUSING BK.	13.0	2.85	8	11088	54272	4.88	4.85	0.03	-
2,950	2,440	JOR. KOWAT BK.	19.1	0.00	2	110	289	2.65	2.63	0.02	-
1,090	1,800	JOR. GULF BANK	4.8	8.64	3	2500	2040	0.82	0.81	0.01	-
4,110	3,480	JOR. TILAK BANK	18.3	0.00	13	1940	7372	3.81	3.80	0.01	-
1,440	1,000	PHILADEL. INV. BK.	9	0.00	9	4300	4697	1.10	1.13	0.03	-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 192.34	%CHG: -0.56	54	31326	116256				
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 117.00	%CHG: 0.00	1	25	45				
1,820	1,450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.6	7.19	4	1050	1754	1.68	1.67	0.01	-
5,050	4,100	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	17.0	2.98	3	1000	4300	4.34	4.30	0.04	-
1,520	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	23	29400	29092	1.00	0.99	0.01	-
1,030	820	REAL ESTATE INV.	12.5	6.67	2	1015	913	0.90	0.90	-	-
3,720	2,990	ARAB TRL. INV. SVCS.	8.0	0.00	7	1437	2417	3.06	3.06	-	-
1,220	950	ARAB EDUCATION	9	0.00	7	18800	18336	0.97	0.97	-	-
2,230	1,650	UNITED CO.	8.0	6.55	6	2100	2528	1.69	1.68	0.01	-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 102.87	%CHG: -0.38	52	55802	65177				
1,250	930	ATLANTIC	9	0.00	4	1050	1082	1.02	1.02	-	-
3,800	3,050	JOR. CHEMIST FACT.	21.6	2.65	36	8460	31736	3.77	3.77	-	-
3,500	2,710	JOR. PROSPERITY CO.	34.4	0.00	2	611	2017	3.20	3.20	-	-
6,100	4,950	ARAB POTASH CO.	17.9	3.39	4	850	5015	5.90	5.90	-	-
10,400	8,720	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.3	7.86	6	306	3115	10.20	10.18	0.02	-
7,250	1,650	INDUSTRIAL COM. AGR.	26.1	0.00	5	1100	2144	2.04	1.94	1.10	-
4,100	3,040	ARAB PEAKS. MINT.	10.3	5.35	5	344	1282	3.75	3.73	0.02	-
7,250	5,650	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	8.8	3.70	3	700	4910	7.01	7.10	0.09	-
2,570	2,050	JORDAN DAIRY	7.6	10.82	1	100	226	2.25	2.26	0.01	-
1,760	1,180	RAPIA INDUSTRIES	7	0.00	1	500	590	1.18	1.18	-	-
950	450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	11.2	0.00	9	4850	2571	0.54	0.53	0.01	-
820	540	KATKAL	8.4	10.54	16	22150	16636	0.75	0.77	0.02	-
1,540	730	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	1	300	228	0.76	0.76	-	-
3,730	2,130	NATL. CABLE WIRE. SPAC	17.7	0.00	33	9886	27593	2.79	2.90	0.11	-
1,170	570	JOR. SULPHUR CHEM.	9	0.00	5	6900	8052	0.77	0.73	0.04	-
1,170	1,120	ARAB PEAKS. CHEM.	27.7	0.00	23	8700	12620	1.41	1.48	0.07	-
2,660	1,420	UNIV. MOD. INDUS.	4.5	13.61	3	600	882	1.48	1.47	0.01	-
1,780	1,140	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	15.7	8.55	6	800	939	1.18	1.17	0.01	-
1,230	840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.1	0.00	16	12050	10689	0.89	0.88	0.01	-
2,350	1,750	EL - JAY READY WEAR	9	0.00	3	900	2672	1.16	1.18	0.02	-
1,360	1,080	INTL. TOBACCO	27.8	0.00	8	2360	2772	1.16	1.18	0.02	-
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 117.73	%CHG: +0.01	190	83337	129705				
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 152.34	%CHG: -0.32	297	170490	311183				
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 26/04/1997											
790	440	JOR. TRADE FAC.	12.0	0.00	4	5400	2430	0.45	0.45	-	-
840	670	ORION INV. SOC.	66.0	0.00	11	9800	1862	0.68	0.69	0.01	-
840	370	ARAB FIA. INVEST.	77	0.00	77	168700	8987	0.51	0.51	-	-
950	740	AL-SABAR INV. 75%	9	0.00	6	26500	14510	0.80	0.79	0.01	-
840	200	JOR. INDUS. MACHINERY	9	0.00	2	500	125	0.24	0.25	0.01	-
430	200	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	9	0.00	5	3200	1403	0.45	0.44	0.01	-
720	490	KATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	4	421	226	0.53	0.53	-	-
840	400	KATL. MULT. ENG. MACHCO	9	0.00	128	253800	186638	0.73	0.71	0.02	-
640	430	KATKAL DIES & MOLDING	9	0.00	2	6800	4080	0.60	0.60	-	-
720	980	JORDAN STEEL	9	0.00	4	3500	2555	0.77	0.73	0.04	-
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TRAD TOTAL					245	480131	304291				

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Suns lead 1-0 as Chapman shoots down Supersonics

SEATTLE (R) — Rex Chapman set a playoff record with nine three-pointers and scored 42 points Friday as the Phoenix Suns stunned the defending Western Conference champion Supersonics 106-101 in the opener of their best-of-five playoff series.

Chapman, who had scored 27 points in three career post season games, shot down the Supersonics with the best long-range performance in playoff history.

"Thank goodness Rex Chapman was on fire tonight," said Suns coach Danny Ainge. "He carried us. He was unconscious."

Chapman was 9-of-17 from behind the arc, breaking the record of eight three-pointers set by former Sun Dan Majerle against Seattle on June 1, 1993.

"I guess it is like being in a zone," said Chapman. "But I really didn't feel that way in the second half. I was cramping up a bit with my calves. I was just trying to make it to the end of the game."

Chapman made four three-pointers and scored 19 points in the second quarter, giving Phoenix a 51-44 halftime lead. He made two more clutch three-pointers in the final three minutes of the game to key a decisive 11-2 surge.

"That's what the playoffs are about, great moments like that," Suns guard Kevin Johnson said. "No matter what happens, Rex will go down as having one of the greatest moments in playoff history. He put on a show."

Gary Payton had 23 points and nine assists and Shawn Kemp added 19 points and 15 rebounds for Seattle, which shot 50 per cent from three-point range, missed just two free throws and held a 45-33 rebounding advantage — and still lost.

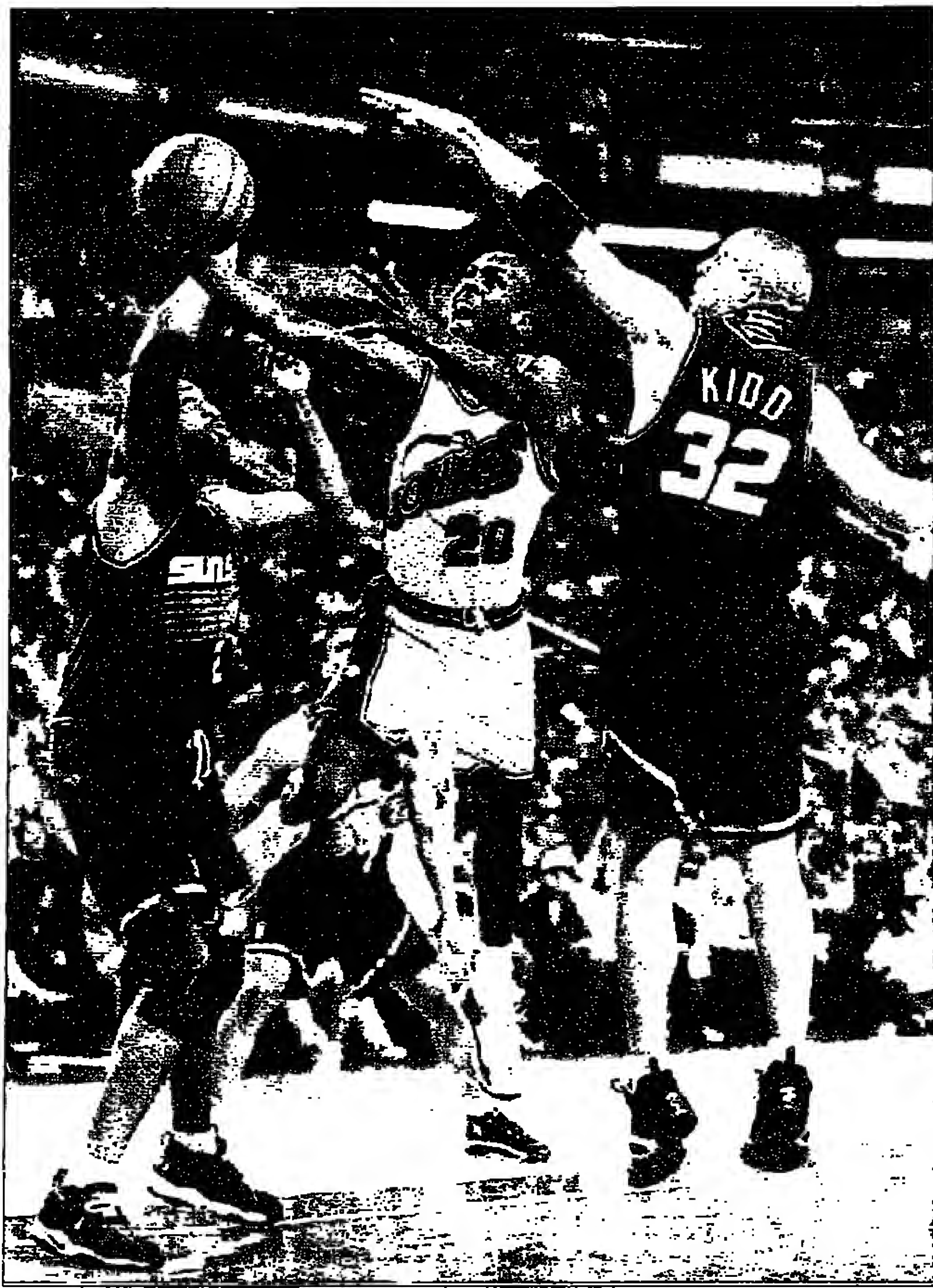
In Los Angeles, Shaquille O'Neal put on his own offensive explosion, overpowering single coverage to score 46 points in leading the Lakers to a 95-77 win over the Portland Trail Blazers in the opener of their Western Conference series.

O'Neal was 17-of-27 from the field and a surprising 12-of-18 from the line for his highest-scoring game as a Laker. He also had 11 rebounds and continually took advantage of Portland centres Arvydas Sabonis and Chris Dudley.

Elden Campbell added 20 points for the Lakers, who allowed Portland just one basket in the final 4 1/2 minutes.

Sabonis and Rasheed Wallace scored 18 points apiece for the Trail Blazers, who beat the Lakers three out of four times in the regular season. Portland shot just 41 per cent (30-of-73) from the field.

In Chicago, Michael Jordan and Steve Kerr scored 11 points each in the fourth quarter as the defend-



Seattle Supersonics guard Gary Payton (20) goes up for a shot against Phoenix Suns defenders Mark Bryant (2) and Jason Kidd (32) during first quarter play in Seattle's Key Arena. (Reuters photo)

ing NBA champion Chicago Bulls held off the Washington Bullets 98-86 in the opener of their Eastern Conference first-round series.

Forwards Dennis Rodman and Toni Kukoc were back from injuries to put the Bulls at full strength.

Jordan had 29 points, eight rebounds and eight assists and slowed down lightning-quick point guard Rod Strickland in the second half. Scottie Pippen added 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Bulls, who never trailed after the first 20 seconds.

"Defence, I feel, won the game for us," said Jordan, who shot 12-of-25 from the field.

"I think we were all a little bit tentative tonight," Pippen said. "Having Toni and Dennis back in the line-

up was great but we certainly didn't have our usual chemistry going, at least not early in the game."

Chicago native Juwan Howard had 21 points and Strickland added 19 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists for the Bullets, who were making their first playoff appearance in nine years. All-Star forward Chris Webber scored just eight points before fouling out.

Rodman sported gold hair and a brace on his sprained left knee. He grabbed nine rebounds before he was ejected for arguing in the fourth quarter. Kukoc, returning from a torn tendon in his foot, scored seven points on 1-of-10 shooting.

In Atlanta, Dikembe Mutombo had 26 points and 15 rebounds and the Atlanta Hawks shut down the

Detroit Pistons in the second half for an 89-75 victory in the opener of their Eastern Conference playoff series.

The 7-2 (218 m) Mutombo, who received his defensive player of the year trophy before the game, anchored a defence that held the Pistons to 32 points in the second half.

Mutombo also made a huge impact on offence as he came within one point of his season high.

"Dikembe was very good in the low post," Hawks coach Lenny Wilkens said. "Coming in, we thought he should be more of an offensive threat than in past years. Dikembe's game has evolved offensively, so we kept going to him."

Christian Laetner scored 18 points for the Hawks. Grant Hill had 20 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists for the Pistons, who won three of four games from Atlanta during the season.

"They just have bigger bodies," Pistons coach Doug Collins said. "Unfortunately for our team, I have to make grant hill work so hard for us and he got tired. Their physical size wore us down."

EASTERN CONFERENCE

•Atlanta 89 Detroit 75
(Atlanta leads best-of-five series 1-0)
•Chicago 98 Washington 86
(Chicago leads best-of-five series 1-0)

WESTERN CONFERENCE

•Phoenix 106 Seattle 101
(Phoenix leads best-of-five series 1-0)
•LA Lakers 95 Portland 77
(Los Angeles leads best-of-five series 1-0)

Chang serves poorly, but still reaches semis

ORLANDO (R) — Michael Chang served poorly but still pulled out a victory over Zimbabwe's Byron Black on Friday to advance to the semifinals of the U.S. men's clay court championships.

The top-seeded Chang, who served erratically with a first serve success rate of only 57 per cent, played just well enough to beat seventh seed Black 7-5 6-3.

Fifth-seeded Jason Stoltenberg of Australia needed three sets to oust clay court specialist Marcelo Filippini of Uruguay 6-7 (3-7) 6-4 6-4 and set up a match against Chang on Saturday.

Defending champion Fernando Meligeni of Brazil was upset by South African Grant Stafford 6-3 6-4. Stafford, at number 73, is ranked one place lower than Meligeni.

Stafford will meet Chris Woodruff in the semifinals. Woodruff, seeded sixth, beat fourth-seeded Alex O'Brien 6-4 6-7 (5-7) 6-4 in a battle between two American former collegiate champions.

There were 12 service breaks in the match between second-ranked Chang and Black, who is ranked 57 and is better known for doubles play.

After the first two service breaks in the opening set, a man in the crowd urged Chang to get his first serve in. When Chang double-faulted to drop serve in the ninth game, the player yelled to himself: "First serve like the gentleman said."

Chang broke Black for the first set 7-5 but the service pattern continued in the second with five breaks in the first six games. Once more, Chang kept a narrow lead, and won the one hour, 46-minute match on his second match point with a backhand winner up the line.

"I'm still trying to find my way on the clay," said Chang, playing in his first clay court tournament of the year. He has won 19 of his last 20 matches this year but could take little satisfaction in his performance Friday.

"It was not the prettiest match out there. But you go out and try to get the job done. It was really weird. You're just not used to being broken so many times."

U.S. soccer teams set up international matches

NEW YORK (R) — Major League Soccer (MLS) clubs, attempting to improve their international profile, are inviting prominent international clubs to play in the United States throughout the year, the league said Friday.

Three clubs have announced international matches, with the Los Angeles Galaxy leading the way with a match in Los Angeles against English Premier League's Aston Villa. The match is scheduled for May 21 at the Rose Bowl.

Also announcing international matches were the New York/New Jersey Metrostars and the Kansas City Wizards.

The Metrostars will host top Turkish Club Galatasaray, which formerly featured Columbus Crew and U.S. national

goalkeeper Brad Friedel. The match is scheduled for Giants Stadium on July 16.

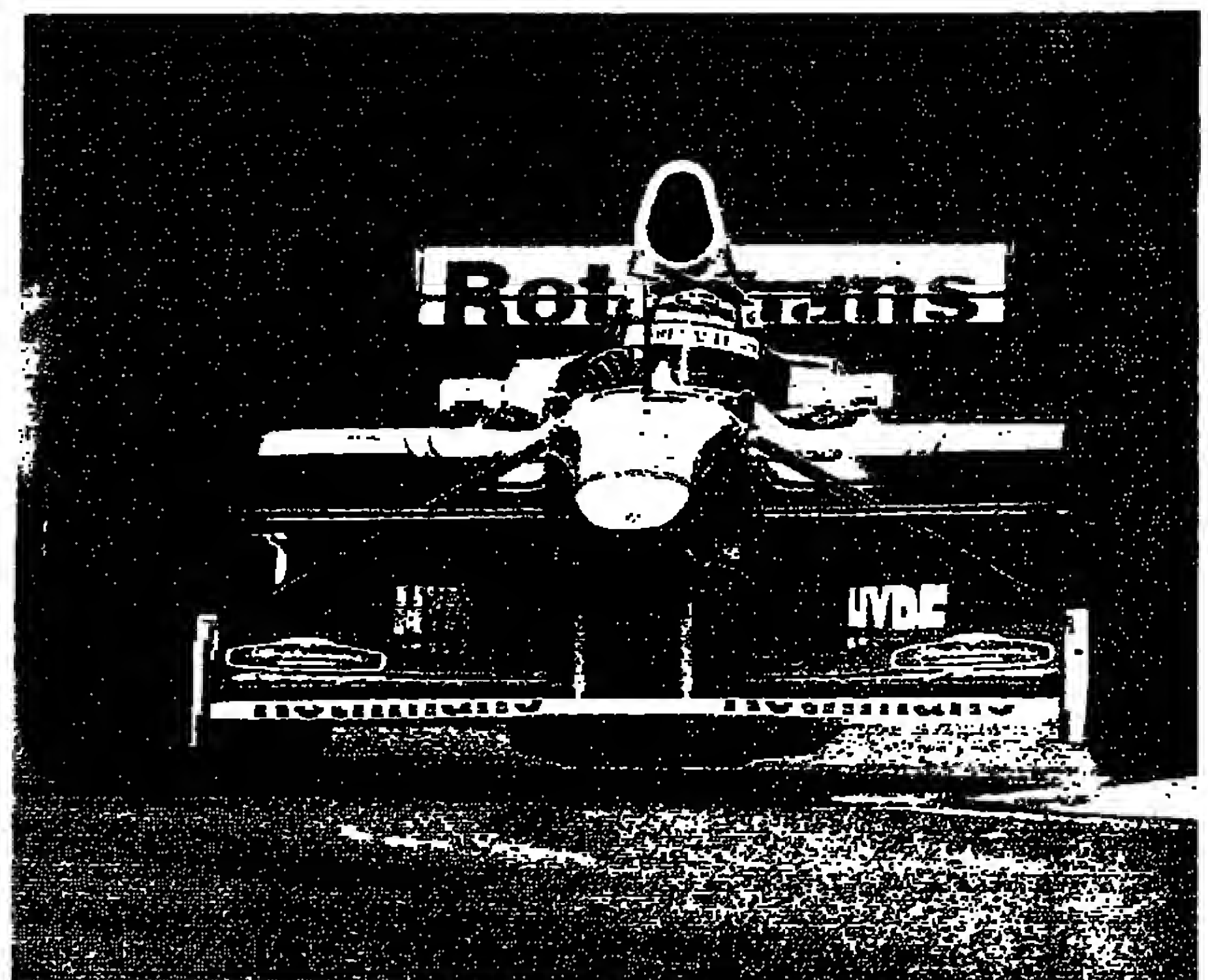
The Metrostars are also playing an exhibition against the Colombian national team at Giants Stadium on May 14.

Kansas City will be playing its first international match on April 30, when the squad travels to Bermuda to take on the island-nation's national team.

The meeting will mark the first away contest by an MLS team against a national team. The Bermuda national team is coached by the legendary Clyde Best, a former standout for Westham United of the Premier League.



Canadian driver Jacques Villeneuve puts on his gloves during a free practice for the San Marino Formula One Grand Prix. Villeneuve clocked the 2nd fastest time of the practice at 1:23.739 (Reuters photo)



Germany race driver Heinz Harald Frentzen takes his Williams-Renault through a curve on his way to set the fastest time in a free practice for the San Marino Grand Prix. Frentzen clocked 1:23.477 (Reuters photo)



Germany's Michael Schumacher looks at a times display during a free practice for the San Marino Formula One Grand Prix April 26. Schumacher clocked the 9th time of the practice at 1:24.982 (Reuters photo)

Leverkusen go level with leaders Bayern

BONN (R) — Bayer Leverkusen drew level on points with Bayern Munich at the top of the German Bundesliga on Friday with an effortless 2-1 win over 10-man Werder Bremen.

Two goals by Ulf Kirsten ensured that last season's no-hopers put pressure on Bayern to win their home fixture against struggling Fortuna Dusseldorf on Saturday.

With Bayern having just six matches left to play, Leverkusen have begun to look like the only side with a real chance of catching the 13-times champions.

Kirsten latched onto a headed pass from Eric Meijer to score his 16th goal of the season in the 23rd minute.

Werder, missing a host of key players, suffered another blow in the 31st minute

when Jens Lellek was sent off for a clumsy tackle on Kirsten.

The former international was back in the action in the 64th minute to underline Leverkusen's dominance after Dieter Ehlts brought down Ze Elias.

Werder pulled one back with a penalty 14 minutes from time.

In the night's other match, 1860 Munich came from

behind to beat Duisburg 3-2 away and maintain their challenge for a UEFA Cup place next season.

European Champions' Cup finalists Borussia Dortmund, lying third, travel to Arminia Bielefeld and fourth-placed VfB Stuttgart visit Borussia Moenchengladbach.

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Chicago Cubs' shortstop Shawon Dunston (R) gets out of the way of a sliding Pittsburgh Pirates' baserunner Jermaine Allensworth (L) on a double play in the third inning of game in Chicago. The Cubs won the game, 11-1, for their first home win of the season (Reuters photo)

Griffey sets Major League mark for homers in April

TORONTO (R) — Ken Griffey Jr. set a Major League record for most home runs in the month of April by slugging three homers Friday to help the Seattle Mariners beat the Toronto Blue Jays and Roger Clemens 13-8.

Griffey homered in the third and seventh off Clemens and then capped off a seven-run outburst in the eighth inning with a blast off Blue Jays stopper Mike Timlin to give him 13 so far this season. The previous record for most April homers was 11 shared by numerous players.

"Junior's something, isn't he?" said Seattle manager Lou Piniella. "That's something. He's impressive. Outside of that, I don't have any adjectives."

Griffey has five more games to try and increase his April total. "We won the game. That's the important thing," said the 27-year-old outfielder.

There were eight homers in the game, including a grand slam by Carlos Delgado and two solo blasts by his Blue Jays teammate Shawn Green. Seattle's Russ Davis erased Toronto's 7-6 lead with a two-run, pinch-hit homer in the eighth.

In Baltimore, Scott Erick-

son, pitching on three days rest, scattered three hits over eight scoreless innings and Eric Davis and Rafael Palmeiro each drove in a run in a two-run sixth as the Baltimore Orioles blanked the Boston Red Sox 2-0.

Erickson (3-1) started a day ahead of schedule to provide another day's rest for Jimmy Key, who is bothered by a stiff neck. Erickson averaged a 4-2 loss to Boston on Monday with a brilliant performance, inducing 18 groundball outs.

Randy Myers worked a scoreless ninth for his league-leading ninth save in nine opportunities.

Tom Gordon (1-3) took the loss as the Orioles (13-6) improved to 8-2 at home.

In Milwaukee, Matt Williams walloped three home runs and Dave Justice slugged a pair to boost the Cleveland Indians to an 11-4 victory over the Milwaukee Brewers. Williams, who had previously hit two homers in a game 21 times with the San Francisco Giants but never three in a game, belted solo shots in the fourth and seventh innings and added a two-run blast in the eighth.

Overall, the Indians hit a club-record eight homers, breaking the franchise record of seven set in 1966

against Detroit. Orel Hersher (2-0) went eight innings for the win. Scott Karl (0-4) took the loss.

In New York, Chicago's two big guns — Frank Thomas and Albert Belle — came to life as the White Sox pounded the Yankees 9-3.

Thomas crushed a three-run homer, his first round tripper of the season, and Albert Belle added a solo shot to help Chicago post consecutive wins for the first time this year. Wilson Alvarez (1-3) worked 7 2/3 innings, allowing three runs — one earned — and five hits.

A two-out error in the first by Yankee outfielder Mark Whiten extended the opening frame and gave Thomas the chance to stake the White Sox to a sizeable lead off starter David Wells (1-1).

At Minnesota, Will Clark's two-run homer capped a five-run third inning as the Texas Rangers posted a 6-3 win over the Minnesota Twins. Rangers starter Ken Hill (2-2) notched his first win since opening day on April 1.

John Wetteland worked the ninth for his sixth save for the Rangers, who have won three in a row overall

and eight of their last 11.

In Anaheim, Dave Hollins drove in three runs and Tim Salmon and Eddie Murray each hit two-run homers to lead the Anaheim Angels to an 8-3 victory over the Detroit Tigers.

Murray's homer off reliever Dan Miceli capped a three-run seventh and closed the scoring. The two RBI gave Murray 1,905 in his career, moving him past Willie Mays into sole possession of seventh place on the all-time list.

Rookie Jason Dickson (4-0) joined New York's Andy Pettitte and Seattle's Jeff Fassero as the majors' only four-game winners. He allowed three runs and four hits in 6 1/3 innings.

In Oakland, Chili Davis belted his seventh career grand slam and drove in five runs and Kevin Appier allowed two runs over seven innings as the Kansas City Royals routed the Oakland Athletics 10-3. Davis' home run in the sixth inning was his first of the season. Bip Roberts and Johnny Damon each had three hits and two RBI for the Royals. Appier (3-0) gave up five hits while striking out seven and walking none.

Willie Adams (1-2) was the loser.

Jordan eliminated from World Cup qualifiers

UAE advance to 2nd round after 2-0 win

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

JORDAN'S NATIONAL soccer team was eliminated from the World Cup qualifiers Saturday after losing 2-0 to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The UAE advanced to the second round after topping the standings at the conclusion of the second leg/first round Asian Group 3 World Cup qualifiers held in Sharjah, the UAE.

Jordan's elimination was a disappointment to thousands of soccer fans in the Kingdom who were glued to their television sets hoping Jordan would win and qualify to the second round for the first time in their history.

However, the UAE, Asia's second ranked team and a 1990 World Cup qualifier, dominated most of the match and their experience paid off as they had several scoring chances which were mostly aborted by Jordan's top player — goalie Mohammad Abu Daoud.

In the first half, Jordan lost scoring chances by Abdullah Abu Zame'h and Hassounah Sheikh which might have changed the course of the match. However, a defensive error in the 26th minute allowed the UAE to score their opening goal by striker Adnan Tilyani. The UAE maintained their 1-0 lead throughout the match as Jordan was unable to equalise.

The UAE scored their second goal in the final minute of the match and advanced to the second round of the competition where they will join the 10 Asian group qualifiers.

Jordan's fourth time in World Cup qualifiers thus ended in elimination in the first round time. The Kingdom took part in qualifiers for Mexico 96, Italy 90, and USA 94.

Only a win would have enabled Jordan to clinch the only qualifying berth from the group as both teams would have tied in overall points and goals and since both teams drew 0-0 in the first leg Jordan would have advanced on aggregate.

On the other hand, a draw would have been enough for the UAE to qualify.

The third team in the group, Bahrain, dropped out of the

race after losing 3-0 to the UAE.

Jordan beat Bahrain 4-1 to keep alive their qualifying chances after a dismal first leg showing in Manama, Bahrain where Jordan drew 0-0 with the UAE who beat Bahrain 2-1. Bahrain had then defeated Jordan 1-0.

Onlookers had criticised the team for not being able to score in both their first round matches.

Even in eight friendly internationals in preparation for the qualifiers, Jordan could only score 6 goals altogether. Jordan's record included three defeats, three goalless draws and two wins — 2-0 and 4-1 over Oman.

Thirty-six Asian countries are contesting the first round World Cup qualifiers and have been divided into ten groups.

Group 1: Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Taiwan.

Group 2: Iran, Syria, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan.

Group 3: United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain.

Group 4: Japan, Oman, Nepal, Macao.

Group 5: Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Yemen, Cambodia.

Group 6: South Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong.

Group 7: Kuwait, Lebanon, Singapore.

Group 8: China, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, Tajikistan.

Group 9: Iraq, Pakistan, Kazakhstan.

Group 10: Qatar, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines.

The 10 groups winners will qualify for the second round, to be held in Singapore, where the teams will be divided into two groups.

The first two from each group will then contest the Asian finals.

The first three qualify directly for the 1998 World Cup in France while the winner of a play-off between the fourth team and the Oceania Zone winner will also qualify.

FINAL GROUP 3 STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	D	GF	GA	Pts
UAE	4	3	-	1	7	1	10
Jordan	4	1	2	1	4	4	4
Bahrain	4	1	3	-	3	9	3

Corretja reaches 2nd final in a fortnight

MONACO (R) — Spaniard Alex Corretja reached his second ATP Tour final in two weeks when he beat Frenchman Fabrice Santoro 6-4 6-4 in the semifinals of the Monte Carlo Open Saturday.

A winner in Estoril two weeks ago, two days after his 23rd birthday, Corretja confirmed against the local hero he is currently among the world's best players on the slow surface, ruining Santoro's hopes of another upset in one hour and 38 minutes.

It was not as easy as it appeared for the Barcelona-born Corretja, who trailed 4-1 in the second set and had to fight a tense uphill battle in the last games.

Santoro, bidding to reach his first final since 1994, was finally undone by exhaustion after his unexpected victories over two former French Open winners, Thomas Muster and Sergi Bruguera, in the previous rounds.

"It was hard work coming back from 1-4 down but I noticed Fabrice was tired and I decided to fight," said Corretja, best known so far for an epic U.S. Open quarterfinal loss against Pete Sampras last year.

"But when I was back at 4-4 then leading 5-4, there was no way I could lose," he added.

Santoro's weariness showed on match point when he hit an easy volley too long.

"It's been a great week for me," the Frenchman, ranked a lowly 90th in the world, said.

Even so, the wins over Muster and Bruguera should bring him back into the top 50 for the first time in more than two years.

Chile's Marcelo Rios and Spain's Carlos Moya are contesting the second semifinal.

Lofton RBI single caps Braves comeback win; Expos beat Mets

ATLANTA (R) — Kenny Lofton continued his torrid hitting, stroking a two-out RBI single in the bottom of the seventh as the Atlanta Braves rallied from a 4-0 deficit Friday to defeat the San Diego Padres 5-4.

Javier Lopez belted a three-run homer and Mark Lemke cleared the fence three pitches later in the fourth inning for the Braves to knot the score after the Padres' four-run third.

Lofton singled in Jeff Blauser from second with two out in the seventh off Joey Long, to put the reigning National League champions ahead for their first and only lead of the game.

The Braves have won nine of their last 11 games and have taken nine of their first 10 games at turner field.

"I was just trying to hit the ball hard," said Lofton, now batting .429 with 12 RBI as the Braves' new leadoff man since coming to Atlanta in a trade with Cleveland.

"I was just trying to hit the opposite field and I did that. When Lopez and Lemke hit the home runs, it took the pressure off

me. Those two came at the right time."

Denny Neagle (3-0) worked seven innings for the win.

"Kenny Lofton is a hitting machine. Mr. Instant Offense," said Neagle.

In Chicago, the Cubs finally broke through at Wrigley field as Kevin Foster pitched a five-hitter and Sammy Sosa homered and drove in five runs as the Chicago Cubs posted their first home win, 11-1 over the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Foster (2-1) walked two, struck out five in his complete game victory and took a shutout into the ninth before Mark Johnson hit a solo homer with one out.

"It was a tough loss yesterday, but we came in loose today like we've always been," said Foster about Thursday's 4-3 loss to the Pirates. "We've already lost 12 games in a row and nobody got down on themselves or anything like that."

The Cubs, who were 0-7 at home, won for just the third time in 20 games this season.

At Florida, Moises Alou knocked in all four runs with a two-run triple, his

seventh homer and a sacrifice fly as the Florida Marlins beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 4-2 to snap a five-game losing streak.

With the Marlins trailing 1-0 in the bottom of the first inning, Alou ripped a two-out triple to right-center off starter Hideo Nomo to score Edgar Renteria and Bobby Bonilla.

Alou extended the lead to 3-1, with a solo homer in the sixth off Dodger reliever Chan Ho Park. He added insurance with a sacrifice fly in the eighth.

Al Leiter (3-1) took the win and Robb Nen notched his fifth save.

Dodgers starter Hideo Nomo (2-2) took the loss, allowing two runs over five innings. Nomo struck out five, including the 500th of his career, in his 65th appearance.

He became the second-quickest to register 500 strikeouts in Major League history, surpassed only by Dwight Gooden of the New York Mets, who did it in 61 games.

In Cincinnati, Mickey Morandini and Rob Butler each had three hits and two RBI in a 15-hit attack as the Philadelphia

Phillies sent the Reds to their fifth straight loss 10-7.

Mark Leiter (3-1) got the win. Losing pitcher Dave Burba (3-2) yielded seven runs and nine hits in 4 2/3 innings.

Cincinnati, 0-13 when trailing after seven innings, scored five times in the bottom of the ninth to make it close.

In Montreal, Carlos Perez pitched six-hit ball and F.P. Santangelo socked a three-run homer to lead the Expos to their fifth straight win, a 4-1 victory over the New York Mets.

Perez (3-1), who missed the entire 1996 season while recovering from rotator cuff surgery, recorded his first complete game since August 6, 1995.

The Mets played without top hitters Todd Hundley, Bernard Gilkey and Lance Johnson. Hundley is bothered by a sore shoulder. Gilkey was out due to a death in the family and Johnson was rested by manager Bobby Valentine.

In Houston, Brad Ausmus singled in Sean Berry with one out in the bottom of the ninth to lift the

Houston Astros to their fifth straight victory, 5-4 over the San Francisco Giants.

Giants reliever Joe Roa (1-1) issued a one-out walk to Sean Berry and a single to Bob Abreu that sent Berry to third and set the stage for Ausmus's winner for Houston (14-7).

"It's early in the season, but we're playing well and have a good attitude, that makes it fun to come to the ballpark and be around the clubhouse," Ausmus said.

Billy Wagner (2-0) worked 1 1/3 scoreless innings for the win, striking out three.

In St. Louis, Vinny

Castilla's two-run single highlighted a four-run first inning and Kevin Ritz allowed two runs over seven innings as the Colorado Rockies held on to beat the St. Louis Cardinals 5-4.

Andres Galarraga and Walt Weiss added RBI singles for the Rockies, who have won four straight and seven in a row on the road.

St. Louis, which trailed 5-0 after five innings, scored once in the sixth, once in the seventh and twice in the eighth but reliever Bruce Ruffin shut the door in the ninth to record his fourth save.

Alan Benes (2-2) took the loss.

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♣ J 6 5

WEST
♠ Q
♥ 10 9 4 3
♦ 8 8 4 3
♣ 9 7 3 2

SOUTH
♠ A 8 6 5
♥ Q 7
♦ K Q
♣ A Q 10 8 4

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♣ Pass 1♣ Pass
1♦ Pass 1♦ Pass
Pass Pass

Opening lead: Ten of ♣

It was beginning to seem that had trump breaks at the club had proliferated with the return of Trump Cup Tommy to the bridge table. This was not really the case — Tommy's presence simply made the players more aware of the poor spades. As our readers know, few players are more adept at neutralizing adverse trump holdings than Tommy, who at all other times was a rather ordinary declarer.

Tommy simply decided to ignore East's takeout double and bid the four-card spade suit anyway. North's distributional jump to four

spades has our endorsement — East's vulnerable takeout double limited the strength of the North hand. Four spades would have been the final contract even if North had raised to only two trumps. South had plenty in reserve to invite, and North to accept.

East rose with the ace on the heart opening lead and returned the suit to Tommy's king. Obviously, East's takeout double made the chances of a 4-1 trump split a real possibility. It would have made little difference how Tommy tackled trumps if East held all three missing honors — the hand was probably unmanageable should East also have a singleton diamond — but what if West held one? The odds were in favor of it being the king, queen or ten rather than a spot card, and Tommy made a good shot at trick three by playing the ace of trumps, dropping West's queen.

Tommy carefully cashed the king of diamonds before leading a second spade, dummy's seven losing to East's ten. East tried a forcing game by leading a third round of hearts, but Tommy met the challenge smoothly by discarding the queen of diamonds from hand and ruffing on the table. Now Tommy simply started running diamonds, and the defense was helpless. If East ruffed, declarer would overruff cross to the king of clubs and continue with diamonds. One heart and two trumps were all that declarer lost.

FOR SALE

Duty free Toyota Landcruiser GX, 1994 model, 4500cc. The vehicle is in very good condition, 54,000km. The following is included: Automatic transmission, E.I. windows/mirrors, A/C, built in fridge and ice maker, mobile phone (GSM) w/car kit, extra lights, roof rack, extended fuel tank. Will be sold at best offer above JD25,000.

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NOTICE OF SALE

Date and Time of Sale
Tuesday, April 29, 1997, from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Location:
American Embassy Warehouse, Abdoun, Back Gate.
ITEMS TO BE SOLD:
Office and Housing Furniture, Equipment and Appliances.
Conditions of Sale:

- This sale will be conducted by sealed-bid.
- Bid forms will be available at the time of sale.
- All items will be available for inspection at the sale time.
- A deposit of 20% of the total bid is required at the time of bid, in cash JD only.
- All bidders will be notified and deposit refunded on Wednesday, April 30th, 1997.
- All property must be removed by Thursday, May 1st, 1997. If not, storage fees of JD 50,000 per day for each lot will be imposed.
- All bids must be deposited by 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 29, 1997.
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Turkey's Islamist-secularist coalition may break amidst fears of military intervention

Two of Ciller's cabinet members resign

ANKARA (AFP) — Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller said for the first time Saturday she might pull her party out of the Islamist-led government, as the fragile coalition appeared to edge closer to collapse.

Her remarks came after the resignation of two cabinet ministers belonging to her conservative True Path Party, and as the military-dominated National Security Council (MGK) met for a key session that could affect the government's future.

"If deemed necessary, the authorised bodies may meet to decide on whether to continue or end the government," Mrs. Ciller was quoted as saying by the Anatolia news agency.

At the MGK, Turkey's highest advisory body, the powerful military commanders were expected to pressure Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan to accept a controversial education reform.

Industry Minister Yalim Erez and Health Minister Yildirim Aktuna announced their resignations earlier on Saturday, blaming Mr. Erbakan's pro-religion slant.

Mr. Erez told reporters: "I told Mrs. Ciller that maintaining this government would not benefit the country and democracy."

Mr. Aktuna, in his letter of resignation, told Mr. Erbakan that "the government has adopted a destructive attitude against the republic's fundamental principles."

The education reform package prepared by Mrs. Ciller's party calls for the closure of hundreds of religious schools as part of a military-sponsored plan to fight creeping Islamisation of the country.

Unless Mr. Erbakan, whose Welfare Party is keen to fight any anti-Islamist moves, agrees to the education reform, the military commanders could force the government to quit, analysts said.

But Education Minister Mehmet Saglam, from True Path, told reporters minutes before the MGK meeting that he believed Welfare ministers would also support the education reform bill.

Welfare and the military, which sees itself as the guardian of modern Turkey's secular heritage, are locked in a bitter row.

The MGK forced the government to approve a package of measures in February aimed at halting the Islamisation trend.

However, Welfare reluctance to implement the measures have kept tensions high.

Top level army officers have been sounding warnings in the Turkish and Western press, saying that Islamist pressure had become "an even graver danger than the PKK," the Kurdish Labour Party, which has been waging a separatist war against the Turkish government for 13 years.

Given the length and bitterness of the struggle between

the military and the Kurdish rebels, which has killed more than 23,000 people in the southeast insurgency, such statements are a clear testament to the depths of army anger.

The army-Islamist rift has raised fears of a military coup, although top military commanders have ruled out the possibility and called for ways for a settlement to the political problems.

The military has staged three coups in Turkey's recent political history on the pretext of protecting the state from destruction.

Several analysts have said Mrs. Ciller has been under strong pressure by the military to quit the government.

Earlier this week, one of Mr. Erbakan's top aides, Welfare's deputy leader Aydin Menderes, called on the premier to step down to avoid further confrontation with the army that would hurt Turkey.

But Mr. Erbakan later said the government would continue.

On Tuesday, President Suleyman Demirel called for early general elections, saying only a fresh legislative vote could bring Turkey out of the ongoing political crisis.

Mr. Erez, who played a key role in Mrs. Ciller's rise as head of True Path in 1993, in recent weeks has predicted the end of the Islamist-led coalition, saying, "this end will serve to preserve Turkey's secular system."

Iraq complains to U.N. secretary general on slow food deliveries

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Iraq's U.N. ambassador, Nizar Hamdoun, on Friday complained to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan about the sluggish pace of food distribution, blaming the United States for blocking contracts.

"We complained to the secretary-general on the slowness of the process (and) that not enough quantities have been accumulated to ensure the continuation of the distribution of the basic items of the Iraqi food basket," Mr. Hamdoun said.

The issue was the oil-for-food deal, which began on Dec. 10 and allows Iraq to sell \$2 billion of crude oil over six months, mainly to buy food and medicine for civilians suffering from sanctions imposed in 1990 after Baghdad troops invaded Kuwait.

Mr. Hamdoun said some outside observers he did not name were linking the U.S. objections to Washington's disapproval of recent air flights by Iraq to ferry pilgrims to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. U.N. envoys are still debating how or whether this violates the sanctions.

"We don't make such linkage because it is unacceptable to link any other event to this humanitarian package," he said.

"We appealed to him (Annan) to try and deal with the matter because it is his responsibility to oversee the implementation of the process," Mr. Hamdoun said.

On Thursday, following a U.N. sanctions committee

meeting, a panel spokeswoman said seven humanitarian contracts were blocked, including rice from Vietnam, beans from Sudan, plastic bags, cooking oil, detergent, sugar and soap from Jordan. No reasons were given for the blocks.

Currently, a total of 498 contracts for humanitarian goods have been submitted to the United Nations. Of this number 217 were received by the sanctions panel, and 122 had been approved. The others were either on hold, pending or blocked.

Mr. Hamdoun said Mr. Annan agreed to look into the matter.

"He agreed with us that something must be done to ensure the process goes smoothly and that enough quantities of those items are provided," Mr. Hamdoun said.

Mr. Hamdoun also said he suggested that Mr. Annan look into raising the number of staff processing humanitarian contracts from the current three to five or six.

Anna Martins Gomes of Portugal, which holds the chairmanship of the committee, also said the committee had blocked a number of contracts deemed as "non-essential products" — such as marble, whisky glasses and jeans from Turkey. But these items, while needing approval from the sanctions committee, were separate from the oil-for-food deal.

Mr. Hamdoun said the goods were ordered by the "private sectors in Iraq which usually goes for contracts of a different nature."



Haji pilgrims waving after boarding a helicopter in the Arar area near Iraqi-Saudi border, on Friday. The helicopters were sent by the government to pick up sick and exhausted pilgrims returning from Mecca in defiance of the U.S. imposed 'no-fly' zone (Reuters photo)

Turkish Cypriots still expect Greek pilgrims

NICOSIA (AP) — A day after Cyprus cancelled a U.N.-sponsored Easter pilgrimage to a monastery in the northern Turkish side, Turkish Cypriots on Saturday lifted restrictions on some visitors in an attempt to lower the tension.

Rauf Denkash, leader of the breakaway state in the north of the island, announced that the number of people barred from crossing into northern side was decreased from eight to three.

"I hope they review their decision and come," Mr. Denkash said. "Our door is open."

The Cypriot cancellation came after the Turkish side removed eight names out of a list of 600 visitors saying that those were not welcome because they had been involved in incidents along the line separating the Turkish and Greek sides of the island.

Greek pilgrims were expected to visit the Apostolos Andreas monastery on Sunday, the Greek Orthodox Easter. Greek Cypriots have been barred from visiting the monastery since Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974 and occupied the northern third of the island, where the monastery is located.

The visit would have been in return for Cyprus' permitting some 470 Turkish Cypriots from the north to visit the Hala Sultan Tekke Mosque in the south last Saturday.

The cancellation of the pilgrimage came as the United Nations is trying to get the leaders of the two communities to meet in hopes of reaching a settlement to the 23-year division of the island.

Red River turns to lake in Canada; inhabitants flee for higher grounds

WINNIPEG, Manitoba (R) — Some 17,000 people headed for high ground as the Red River spread into a 1,295-square-kilometre lake Friday and soldiers worked around the clock to build a 24-kilometre dike southwest of this city of 650,000.

Residents southwest of Manitoba's capital were put on evacuation alert Friday in case the new dike is breached.

Red River floods in 1979 covered 1,036-square kilometres of southern Manitoba and a comparable flood in 1950 forced the evacuation of 100,000 Winnipeg residents. About 2,072-square kilometres may be flooded as the Red River crests this year.

"The anxiety level is rising," Winnipeg Mayor Susan Thompson said. "We are eight to nine days away from the peak. We have the factors of overland flooding. The forecasts are changing, we saw a bit of rain today. We're trying to predict the unpredictable."

One unforeseen event was a 1.3-metre rise in a Red River tributary Friday morning that flooded two downtown Winnipeg apartment buildings, threatening to cut off power. Ms. Thompson said.

Another 6.3 centimetres of rain was forecast to fall on southern Manitoba early next week, Canadian and U.S. meteorologists said.

Two boys and a man were presumed drowned so far this week in Manitoba. Winnipeg hospitals drafted plans to evacuate 1,400 patients as the province's second largest facility suspended elective surgery and transferred half its 575 patients.

Winnipeg's water supply was secure, with ponds east of the flood zone, but a health threat was seen coming from the United States.

"There's a concern about all the animal carcasses coming up the river from the states. The danger is hepatitis A," Ritchot rural municipality official Bob Stefaniuk said from the barricaded town of St. Adolphe, 10 kilometres south of Winnipeg.

Tens of thousands of cattle drowned and floated upstream where Canadian officials hoped to retrieve and incinerate the carcasses. Manitoba Emergency Management Organisation Executive Coordinator Harold Clayton said.

More than 2,000 Canadian troops were deployed to battle the rising Red River as 100 earth-moving machines hauled earth to the dike southwest of Winnipeg which must be done by Sunday.

More than three million sandbags were laid in the valley while another three million were used for dikes in Winnipeg.



Bandit holds Canada goose hostage in robbery

TORONTO (R) — Police on Friday were looking for a man who walked into a donut shop with a Canada goose and threatened to harm the bird unless someone gave him some cash. "He said, 'Give me some money or I'll kill the goose,'" Sergeant Steve Sheppard said of the incident which occurred Thursday. Sheppard said a female customer at the store tried to convince the man to release the bird but gave in when he threatened to wring the goose's neck in front of her. The woman walked to a nearby bank machine and withdrew an undisclosed amount of money. When she handed over the cash, the bandit gave up the goose and escaped from the store. The bird was turned over to the humane society. Police speculated the man picked up the goose from a nearby park, where the birds are regular visitors. If caught, the man could be charged with extortion and cruelty to animals, among other charges. "Who knows? There might be something under the migratory birds act that we could use," Sheppard said.

President Yeltsin's puppet missing

MOSCOW (R) — A puppet of President Boris Yeltsin used in a popular television show has been stolen, Interfax News Agency (INA) said on Friday. The satirical "Kukly" (puppets) programme, which is aired weekly on commercial NTV, has ordered a new replica of the 66-year-old Kremlin boss but will have to use a spare puppet that is a less convincing likeness for the time being, it said. INA said NTV had ruled out any political motive for the theft and had linked it to the programme's high popularity ratings.

Clinton goes on diet

WASHINGTON (AFP) — President Bill Clinton has joined the many Americans fighting the battle of the bulge: he's on a diet that restricts him to 1,500 calories a day. Clinton has reportedly lost some three to four kilos since going on the diet. And the president has — six weeks after surgery to repair a torn knee tendon — stopped taking pain medication for the injury and hopes his two one-hour physical therapy sessions will permit him to walk without crutches within one month.

Pope to vacation in Italy

AOSTE, Italy (AFP) — Pope John Paul II will take his summer vacation in Italy's Aosta Valley from July 9-19. Aosta Bishop Giuseppe Anfossi announced Friday. This will be the sixth vacation in the Aosta Valley, in the Italian Alps, for the head of the Roman Catholic Church. He will, as usual, stay in the town of Les Combes, which is 1,700 metres above sea level. The Pope will stay in a secluded wood and stone chalet surrounded by pine trees, far from the prying eyes of journalists and tourists.

Streisand ex blames her for son's homosexuality

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Actor Elliott Gould, the ex-husband of Diva Barbara Streisand, says their son Jason's homosexuality is his parents' — and particularly his mother's — fault. "It's a result of conditioning," Gould said, criticising Jason's upbringing in the wake of the divorce. "I think he was affected by not having love at a vital stage in his life," Gould said. "Barbra was consumed with her business and career, and I just wasn't there."

Survivors recall Oklahoma city

DENVER (R) — Survivors of the Oklahoma City bombing, the first witnesses in the trial of Timothy McVeigh, Friday vividly recreated the morning of the blast, recalling desperate searches for loved ones lost in the rubble.

Susan Hunt, one of nine witnesses in the first day of testimony, described caring for her co-workers in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building injured in the April 19, 1995, explosion.

"One woman said, 'I can't see. Do I have an eye?'" she testified. "I didn't answer her because she didn't."

Helena Garrett sobbed, and moved many listeners to tears, as she testified about the frantic hunt for her 16-month-old son Tevin in the chaos.

She saw babies being carried out of the debris. Not realising they were dead, she begged rescuers. "Please don't put our babies on the glass" from shattered windows on the ground.

Ms. Garrett could not find Tevin that day and did not learn officially that he was dead for three days. His head was so badly mangled that funeral directors would not let her see his wounds, she said.

Nineteen children were among the 168 people killed. The prosecution claims Mr. McVeigh, motivated by anti-government hatred and extremist politics, blew up the federal building in hopes of provoking a "second American revolution."

Also among those searching the rubble that day was Sergeant John Averá, who crawled in the dark depths to follow victims' cries.

"I heard a baby choking," he said. That baby was P.J. Allen, who was rescued and survived.

Then Sgt. Averá found a second baby in a hole, but "I couldn't feel any life," he said. He handed her to a firefighter outside — a moment captured in a famous photograph that later won a Pulitzer Prize.

"I told him I think the baby's critical. Please take

it," he said. The child was Baylee Almon, killed the day after her first birthday.

Mr. McVeigh, 29, wearing an open-necked white shirt and khaki trousers, watched closely and took notes. The tall, thin Gulf war veteran has pleaded not guilty to murder and conspiracy charges and could face the death penalty if convicted.

Defence attorneys have tried to undermine the government's case by suggesting the possibility of an uncaptured accomplice, confused eyewitnesses and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) mishandling of the evidence.

The day's testimony ended at 5 p.m. local time and was scheduled to resume Monday morning.

The court proceedings began with jurors listening to the sounds of the blast, captured on a tape of a hearing of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board across the street.

After about two minutes of voices, the tape is interrupted by a huge roar, crashes, rumblings and the frightened shout of "let's get out of here."

Victims' family members in the courtroom tensed visibly at the start of the harrowing tape and reached for one another tearfully as the deadly explosion was heard.

Ms. Hunt, who worked for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), recalled her co-worker Lee Sells chatting with a friend just before the explosion. Asked by a prosecutor if she ever heard Ms. Sells' voice again, she replied, "No, I did not."

Roy Sells, seated in the courtroom, bowed his head and began to cry at the mention of his late wife.

Former Marine Corps recruiter Michael Norfleet testified that the bomb "filleted open" his right eye, leaving him partly blind and destroying his dreams of being a pilot.

Netanyahu's scandal not over; Deri claims racial-religious bias

TEL AVIV (AP) — For several days, a small but steady trickle of Israelis has headed to the parliament building with a simple message: the country's latest political scandal is not over.

Filing into a white tent in a garden outside the Knesset, these protesters — most of them young leftists — have been signing a petition calling for an official inquiry into the influence-trading scandal that reached the highest levels of government.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu escaped indictment. But as this simple garden protest has shown, the scandal could likely hurt the government and the country for a long time.

Already, the scandal has exacerbated long-simmering tensions between Israel's Sephardi Jews, of north African and Middle Eastern descent, and the Ashkenazis, of European descent.

It also has destabilized Mr. Netanyahu's governing coalition, with at least two parties threatening to bolt in the coming weeks.

An already nasty relationship between Mr. Netanyahu and the media has turned nastier. Perhaps most importantly, it has weakened the already faint possibility for progress anytime soon in peace talks with the Palestinians.

The Sephardi-Ashkenazi tensions burst onto the surface at a raucous rally Wednesday on behalf of Ariele Deri, the Moroccan-born leader of the religious Shas Party, and the only politician expected to be charged in the affair.

The scandal revolved around Mr. Netanyahu's appointment in January of a political crony as attorney general. In a story reported by Israel TV, Mr. Deri demanded the appointment in return for political support: the crony would end Mr. Deri's ongoing trial on corruption charges, and Mr.

Netanyahu would get crucial cabinet votes for a troop withdrawal from the West Bank city of Hebron.

The attorney general, overwhelmingly seen as unqualified, resigned after one day in office.

Last Sunday, his replacement announced that while there wasn't enough evidence to indict Mr. Netanyahu or his justice minister, there was enough to indict Mr. Deri for blackmail.

Mr. Deri and his backers responded angrily that he was being singled out for ethnic and religious reasons.

"How long, for God's sake, will the Sephardi Jews suffer?" asked Rabbi David Yosef, son of Shas' spiritual leader, Ovadia Yosef, at Wednesday's rally of 10,000 supporters.

The tensions were enough to spur a plea from Israel's president, Ezer Weizman, who asked Shas leaders Wednesday "not to let the ethnic genie out of the bottle."

A day later, Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein insisted he and his prosecutors "do our job without any ethnic or religious bias."

Mr. Netanyahu faced more trouble as the week ended. Pressure has mounted on him to replace his justice minister, Tsachi Hanegbi, also implicated in the scandal.

Trade Minister Natan Sharansky, the former Soviet dissident and a good friend of Mr. Netanyahu's, threatened to withdraw his Russian Immigrant Party from the coalition if there are no major changes in the way government officials are appointed. Shas also threatened to bolt.

Mr. Netanyahu also faced a supreme court hearing in coming days on opposition appeals of the decision not to indict him. Although the court isn't expected to overturn the decision, some said that wasn't a certainty.

The court hearing is also

likely to yield more embarrassing details of the scandal.

In the meantime, Mr. Netanyahu, once the darling of journalists for his good looks and snappy sound bites, has become engaged in a bitter battle with the media.

Mr. Netanyahu has blamed Israel TV's Channel 1, which broke the scandal, for his troubles, saying it was part of a liberal plot to topple him.

Some journalists, he said, were "not ready yet to resign themselves to the decision of the voter in the last elections, and almost every evening they are trying to question the legitimacy of the government."

The Israeli Journalists Association, in turn, accused Mr. Netanyahu of fomenting anger that led to two recent mob attacks on TV crews.

Finally, many fear the political chaos will stultify peace talks with the Palestinians, already virtually dead before the scandal began.

The affair effectively ended the possibility that opposition leader Shimon Peres would bring his Labour Party into the government, which would have been a boon for peace talks.

And Palestinians fear Mr. Netanyahu will be even more beholden to his right-wing partners now that his six-party coalition is so precarious. They fear that could mean increased settlement activity and stalling on troop withdrawals from the West Bank.

Palestinian Cabinet Minister Hanan Ashrawi fears the situation could get worse.

"Whenever an Israeli government — especially this government — has an internal or domestic problem, it provokes a conflict with us," Ms. Ashrawi said. "They would not mind at all provoking some kind of distraction from their current problems."